January 2018

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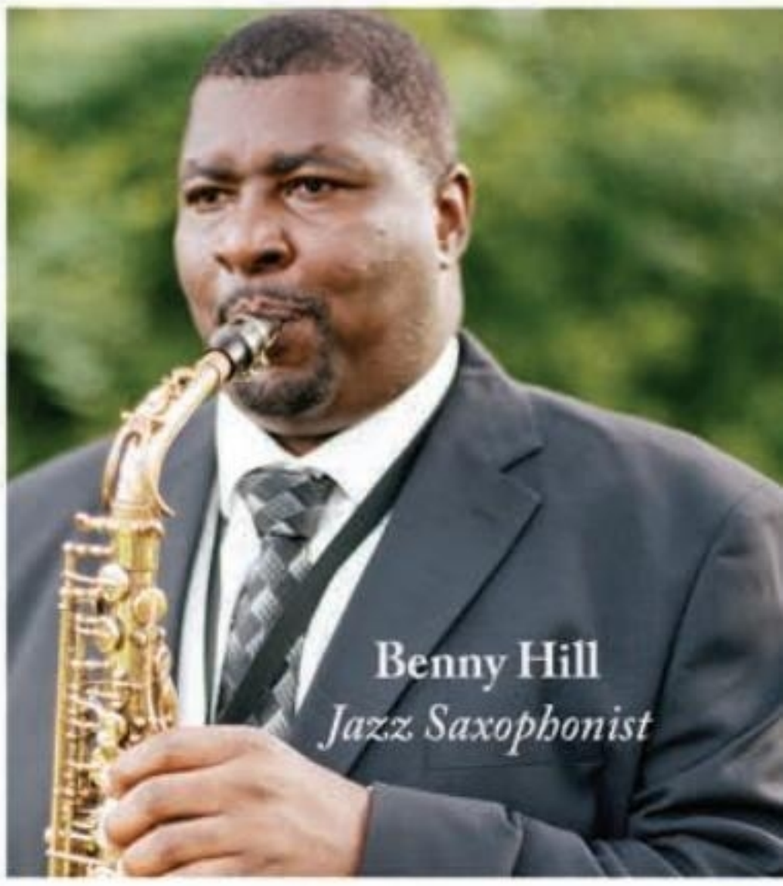

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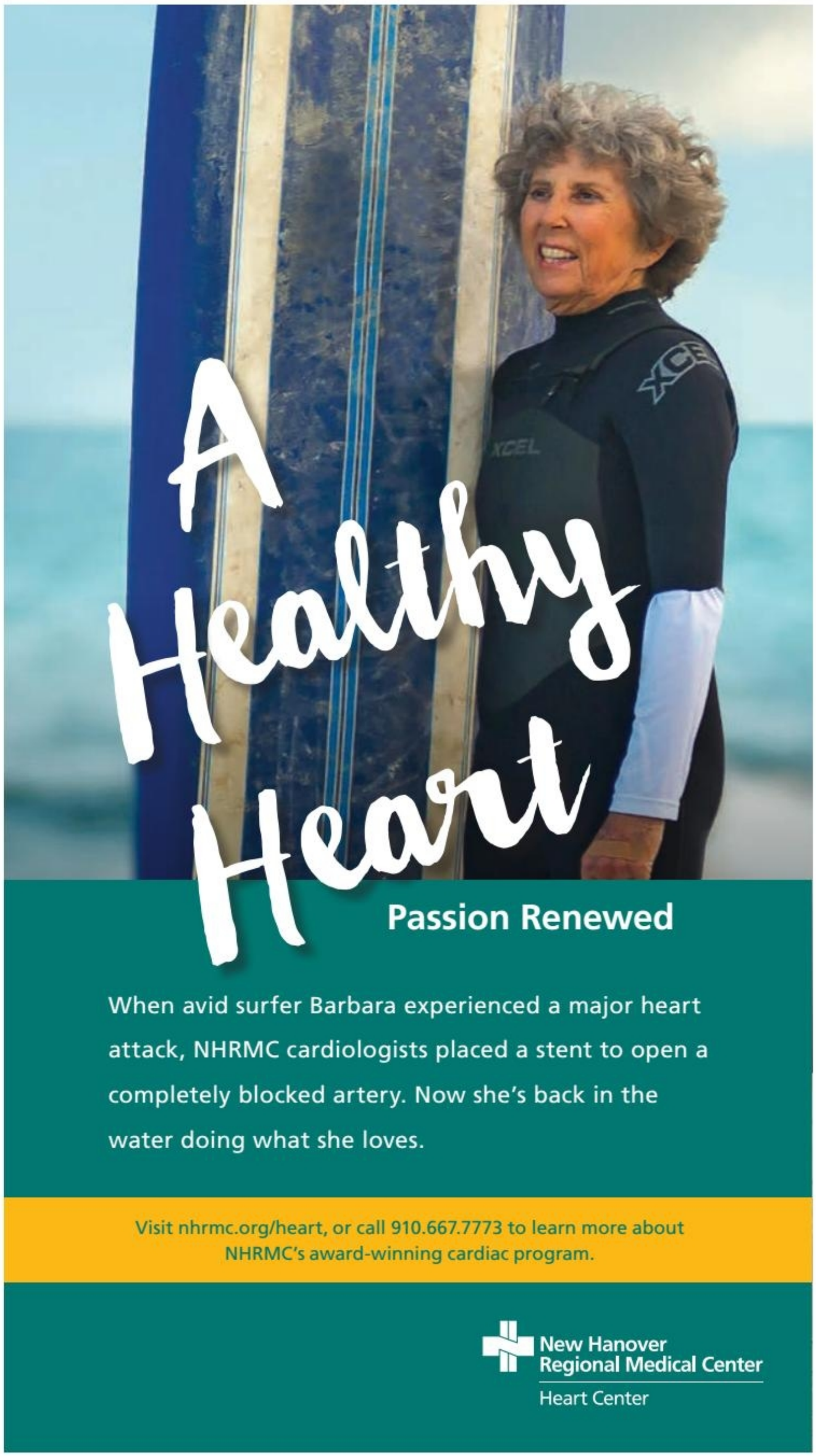
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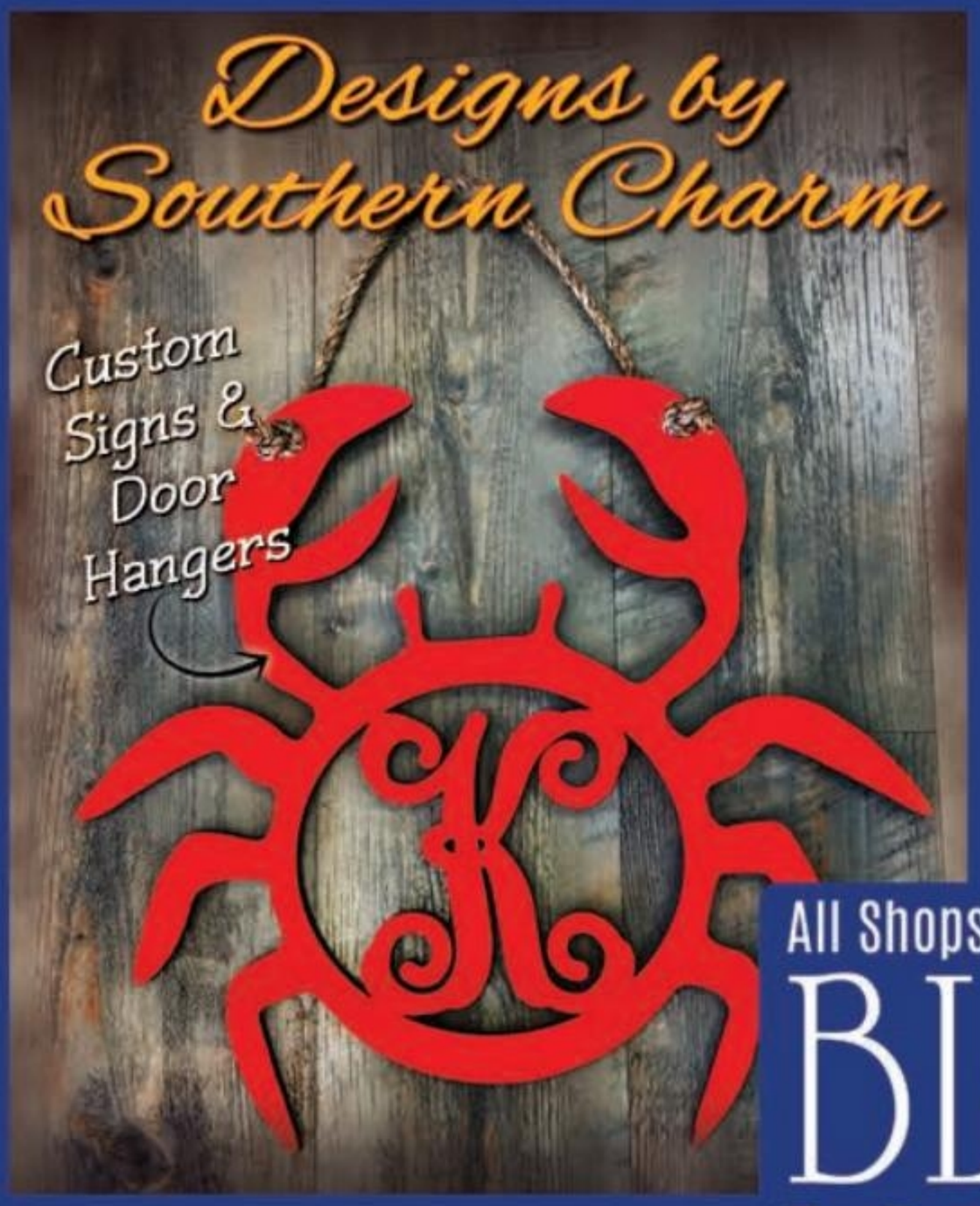

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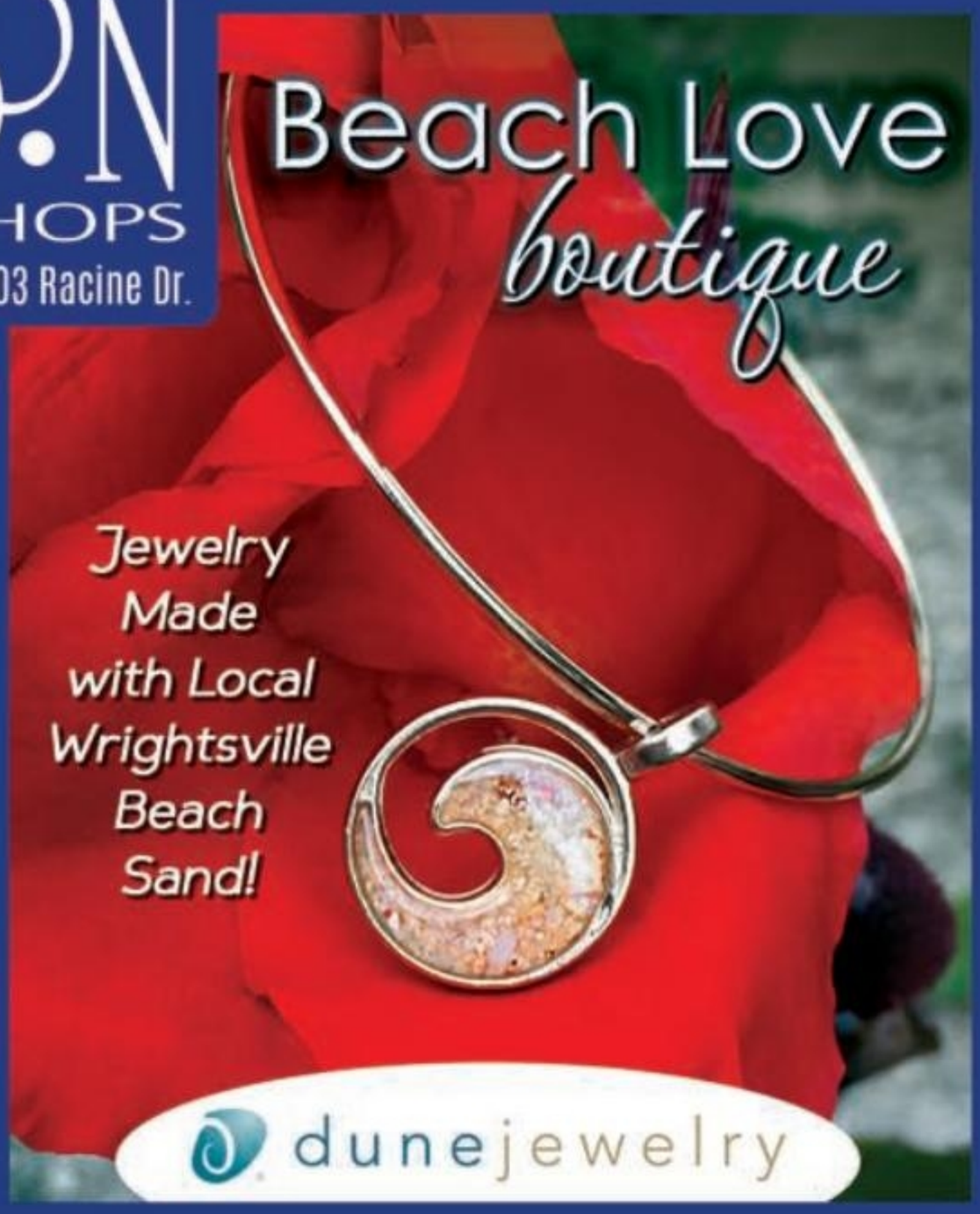

January/February 2018

Features

51 About Magic
Poetry by Ry Southard

52 A Father's Journey
By Kevin Maurer
Stillman Wightman traveled 1,200 miles from New York to Fort Fisher to bring his son home

58 Claimed By the Sea
Story & Photograph by Virginia Holman
A beachcomber's love letter

60 Sportsman's Paradise
By William Irvine
Designer Liz Carroll creates an elegant retreat for a busy Wilmington doctor and outdoorsman

67 Almanac
By Ash Alder
January's blue moon is inspiration for hot wassail

Departments

13 Simple Life
By Jim Dodson

16 SaltWorks

19 Omnivorous Reader
By Stephen E. Smith

23 A Writer's Life
By Wiley Cash

27 Salty Words
By Jillian Weiss

29 True South
By Susan S.Kelly

31 Lunch With a Friend
By Dana Sachs

34 Port City Journal
By John Wolfe

41 Food for Thought
By Jane Lear

45 In the Spirit
By Tony Cross

49 Birdwatch
By Susan Campbell

68 Calendar

73 Port City People

79 Accidental Astrologer
By Astrid Stellanova

80 Papadaddy's Mindfield
By Clyde Edgerton

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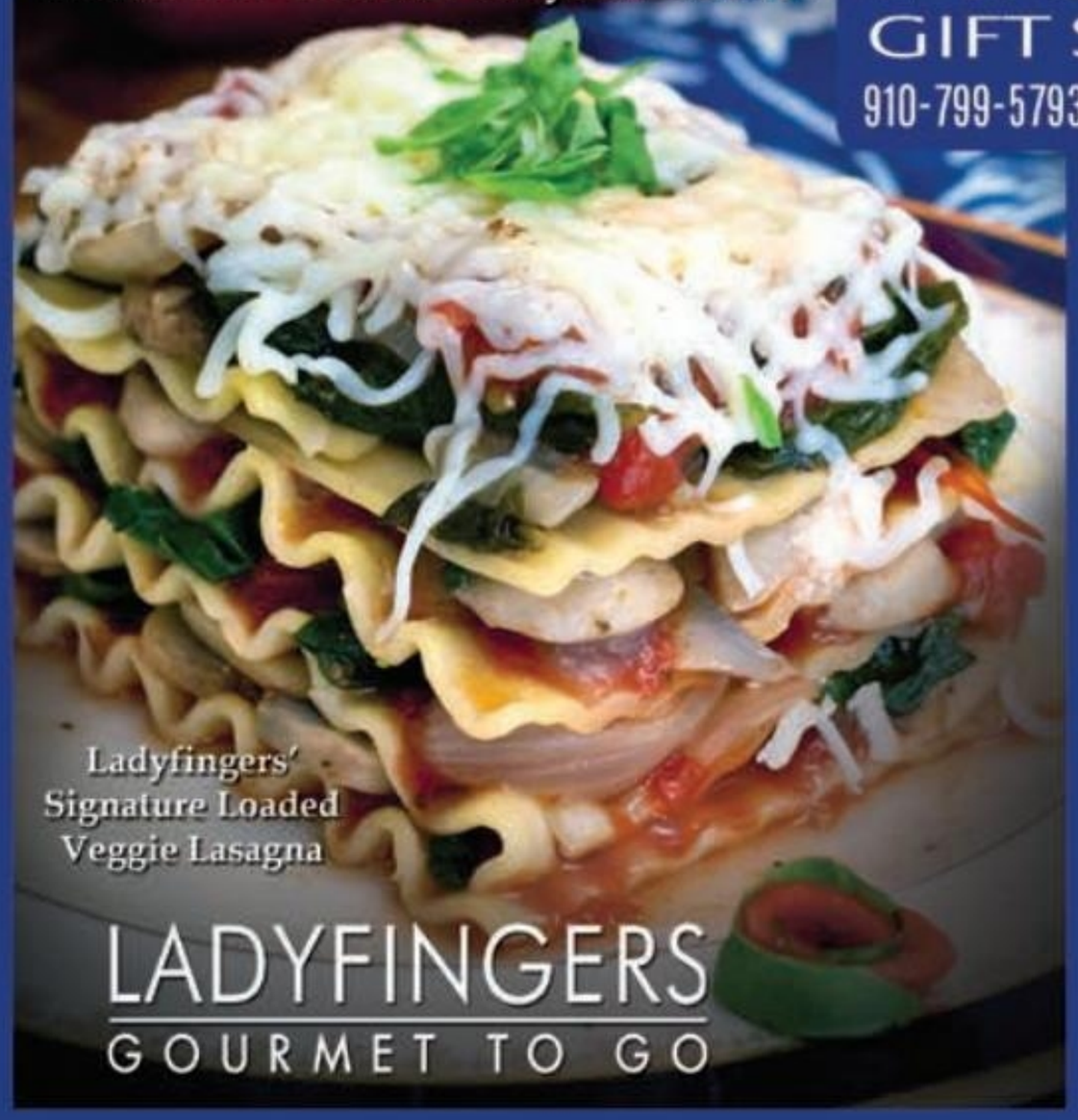

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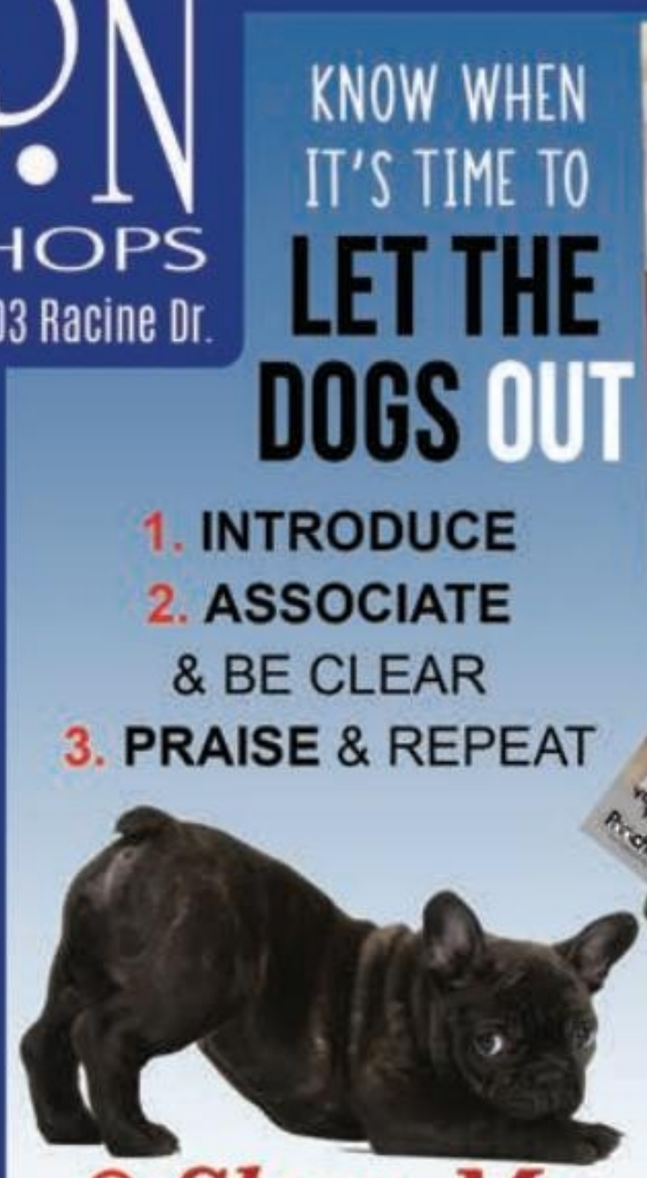

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The Road to Greatness

Along a historic American highway, the heart and soul of a nation is revealed

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE MEMORIAL ILLUMINATION AT ANTIETAM NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD

By Jim Dodson

Over the past few months I've been traveling the Great Wagon Road, researching a book about the 18th-century route that brought generations of Scotch-Irish, English and German immigrants to the American South, including both branches of my family.

Roughly following the so-called Great Warrior's Path that lay along the eastern slopes of the Appalachian mountains from Pennsylvania to Georgia, used for millennia by native American peoples for hunting and warfare, the Great Wagon Road stretched more than 800 miles from Philadelphia to Augusta, Georgia, and was said to be the most traveled road in Colonial America.

Thomas Jefferson's daddy mapped and named it, and a young George Washington cut his teeth scouting and fighting Indians along it. Dan'l Boone traveled the Road from North Carolina to the unexplored frontiers of Kentucky and Ohio, while three major wars that shaped our national identity were conducted along it: the French and Indian War followed by the American Revolution, and a dozen critical battles of the American Civil War, most notably the bloodbaths at Antietam and Gettysburg.

By my rough count at least three presidents and more than a dozen colleges and universities grew up along the Great Road, as I first heard a Salem College history professor call it 40 years ago, not to mention a dozen of Eastern America's most important towns and cities, home to social visionaries and inventors who created everything from the Conestoga wagon to Texas Pete hot sauce and Krispy Kreme Doughnuts

Most of the early Quakers who populated Guilford and Alamance counties also made their way to a new life in these parts by traveling the Great Wagon Road, a branch of which was called the Carolina Road that took others (including my English and Scottish forebears) to Hillsborough and the coast.

Though I'm not yet halfway on my travels from Philadelphia to Georgia, thus far it has been a trip full of rewarding surprises, unexpected turns, fresh insights and inspiring encounters. In my quest to know more about where we collectively came from — and how this remarkable road shaped the nation we inhabit today — I've already traversed a dozen major battlefields and museums, attended lectures and church services, hung at the elbows of area historians and academic scholars, spent hours in local archives, historical associations and historic sites, investigated iconic forefathers and forgotten heroes, unapologetically played tourist everywhere I could, checked out the hokiest roadside attractions and sampled local cooking every chance I got.

What a simple pleasure this project has been — not to mention a refresher course on the power of American democracy during one of the most divisive years in memory.

For perspective, try Googling "What Americans Know About Their Own History" and you may be deeply alarmed to learn what we collectively *don't* know about our past and how our democracy was designed to work. Various polls over the past decade have shown, for example, that 67 percent of Americans have no idea what the purpose of the U.S. Constitution is for — or what exactly an "amendment" means. Another recent poll indicated more than half of high school graduates thought the 4th of July celebrated the end of the Civil War, another that the majority of Americans couldn't simply name the three main branches of American government.

The estimated half million frontier settlers who came down America's first great "highway" beginning in the early 18th century — Ulster Scots, German Lutherans, Moravian bretheren, Amish and Menonite farmers, Presbyterian and Anglican preachers, and Eastern Jews — had no prescient awareness of the diverse nation they were collectively creating. The vast majority were simply ordinary folks who'd crossed oceans to seek a fresh start, religious freedom and a piece of the New World they could claim as home.

In the process, the native peoples of North America were largely marginalized and exterminated, a tale as old as the hills, and an entire race was enslaved — mistakes we are still struggling to come to terms with and compensate for today.

For this and other reasons, my desire to travel the "Road that made America," as a prominent Pennsylvania historian called it during a long lunch

conversation, has been building in me for at least two decades.

That's why my travels along the Great Wagon Road have been such a soul-stirring pleasure — a much-needed reminder of why America has *always* been great and simply needs to get back in touch with the values and principles that drew our forebears to a wilderness in the first place.

In Philadelphia, I dined at the historic City Tavern where the Sons of Liberty plotted the birth of a nation. I sat for a golden hour in a sunlit pew at Christ Church where Washington, Franklin and Betsy Ross worshipped, chatting with a fellow who lives and breathes the values of Benjamin Franklin, Americans' first true Renaissance man

At Lancaster, I dove deep into Amish culture and found myself trying to eat my way through the nation's oldest farmers' market and discovering the origins of the revolutionary Conestoga wagon that carried pioneer Americans across the continent. Just down the road in York, where in 1778 the Second Continental Congress signed the Articles of Confederation (a prelude to our Constitution). I sat in on a delightful night of local historians spinning tales about a town where the American Industrial Revolution essentially began.

On a cold morning in late November, I attended the 154th reading of Abe Lincoln's extraordinary Gettysburg Address with a distinguished Lincoln biographer, standing on the very spot in the National Cemetery where Lincoln gave the most inspiring speech in American history. Afterwards, I lunched with the nation's leading Lincoln impersonator — a biology teacher from Illinois — who told me that "playing Lincoln" had profoundly changed his life in a dozen different ways. The next morning, I walked the famous battlefield at dawn where the course of the Civil War changed over three days in July of 1983. I could swear I heard drums.

Two weekends later, my wife and I joined a slow-moving line of cars inching across five miles of soulful Potomac countryside simply to drive — sans headlights — through the annual illumination of the Antietam National Battlefield, the 29th year that more than 1,500 area Scouts and volunteers have placed 23,000 luminaries on the tranquil killing ground where more Americans died on a single day than in any other battle. The next morning, we attended services at the oldest Episcopal church in West Virginia, just across the river in Shepherdstown, a gorgeous little Potomac town where the wounded of Antietam shared Trinity Church on alternate weeks going forward — the Union wounded one week, the wounded boys in butternut and gray the next.

In Hagerstown, Maryland, where the German wing of my family got off the GWR to head west to a new life in Cumberland and West Virginia, we attended a wonderful German Christmas market and spent an hour learning about the Colonial origins of Christmas in America during a walking tour of town-founder Jonathan Hager's original stone house. Our guide was a retired career military man named Max Gross whose love of local history was flat-out contagious. "We are a blend of so many diverse cultures and people in America," he said, explaining how various aspects of Christmas traditions really came from a dozen different cultures ranging from Poland to Turkey. "We think of these traditions as uniquely ours, but we are the splendid sum of so many cultures and people who came together in a wilderness to form the greatest democracy in history."

I could go on indefinitely about the diverse and lovely Americans I've met on my little odyssey through time and history, the sacred places I've walked, the many surprising things I've managed to learn, and even the hokey tourist traps I've explored with boyish glee.

For this correspondent, the year ahead holds the promise of more spiritually enriching encounters with people from all walks of American life, a lesson of civic renewal among people who love their towns and communities with a passion that is palpable, a devotion that is true. Despite our present differences, their Great Road ancestors, I suspect, would be proud of how far they — and we — have come.

Contact Editor Jim Dodson at jim@thepilot.com.

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SaltWorks

I Hear a Symphony

The Wilmington Symphony Masterworks concert will feature composer and keyboardist Julia Walker Jewell. A native of Wilmington, Jewell wears many hats in the local music community, including as the leader of the Port City Trio, a band that performs works from the Great American Songbook. She is also the music director of the Wrightsville United Methodist Church and the proprietor, with her husband, Kelly, of Ted's Fun on the River in downtown Wilmington. A composer of both classical and jazz music, Jewell will perform her original composition "Dance of the Coin," accompanied by dancers choreographed by Lesa Rogers Broadhead. Also on the program: "Polovtsian Dances," by Alexander Borodin. Tickets are $25-35 and $10 for students. Feb. 2, 7:30 p.m. Wilson Center, 703 N. 3rd St., Wilmington. Info and tickets: 910-362-7999 or wilmingtonsymphony.org.

Karma Camellia

The Tidewater Camellia Club is a venerable Wilmington institution, long affiliated with the American Camellia Society. The group meets monthly during the fall and winter at the New Hanover County Arboretum and annual dues are $15 for individuals, $20 for a family. All are welcome. On Feb. 24 the group will host the 68th annual Tidewater Camellia Club Winter Show and Camellia Sale. The sale will take place from 10 a.m. and run until all plants are sold. Other highlights include a children's camellia art display, camellia education exhibit and interactive children's exhibit. The judged show —more than 500 blooms will be on display— takes place from 1 to 5 p.m. Admission is free. Feb. 24, 10 a.m. New Hanover County Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. For more information: tidewatercamelliaclub.org.

Home Improvement

Winter is a great time to make a spring battle plan for home renovations, so it's a no-brainer to pay a visit to the Wilmington Spring Home Show, Feb. 17 and 18 at the Wilmington Convention Center. Various national and local exhibitors will provide information about landscaping, home improvement and remodeling projects, and you will be able to consult with professionals to find the right contractors and designers for your project. Admission is free. Feb. 17, 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.; Feb. 18, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt St., Wilmington. For more information: wilmingtonhomeshow.com.

Calling All Paddlers…

The 10th annual Cold Stroke Classic, an SUP (stand-up paddleboard) competition, will be held at the Blockade Runner on Jan. 20. With two races and multiple divisions, competitors can choose the 3.5-mile Short course or the 7-mile Long course. All races will be held in the Intracoastal Waterway. There will be a cash purse of $1,250 for the Long course; $5,000 in prizes for the Short and Long courses. Proceeds benefit Nourish NC, a nonprofit dedicated to fighting hunger in New Hanover County. Registration is required and fees are based on races and age group. Jan. 20 at 9:30 a.m. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Blvd., Wrightsville Beach. For info and registration: coldstrokeclassic.com.

Amazing Grace

After five months on Broadway, *Amazing Grace* comes to Wilmington's Wilson Center. The musical tells the story behind the song that has become a household name. At the height of the British slave trade, John Newton sets out on a dangerous and life-changing journey and returns to lead a movement of freedom. The musical's creator, Christopher Smith, is a former police officer who quit his job after feeling called to write the show. Tickets start at $46. Jan. 27, 7:30 p.m. Wilson Center, 703 North Third St., Wilmington. For info and tickets: cfcc.edu.

Days of Wine and Chocolate

The Wilmington Wine and Chocolate Festival is a great way to satisfy your refined cravings. A Grand Tasting on Friday night will have drinks and entertainment from comedians Daniel Butler and Wilmington local Timmy Sherrill, owner of Dead Crow Comedy Room and Top Comic at the Cape Fear Comedy Festival. On Saturday and Sunday enjoy a European-inspired indoor marketplace with vendors from Catering Thyme, Weathervane Winery, Duplin Winery, Native Vines Winery, Southern Charm Winery and more. The marketplace will also have live music, culinary demos and a children's area. Tickets: $45 for the Grand Tasting and $15 for the marketplace. Feb. 2, 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., Feb. 3, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Feb 4, 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. Coastline Conference and Event Center, 501 Nutt St., Wilmington. Info and tickets: wilmingtonwineandchocolatefestival.com.

153rd Anniversary of the Battle of Fort Fisher

January marks the 153rd anniversary of the Second Battle of Fort Fisher, when Union forces captured the strategic Confederate stronghold. The fall of the fort closed Wilmington as the last major port for the Confederacy and left the Confederate Army with no source of supplies. The battle will be commemorated with a day full of events at Fort Fisher Historic Site. Civil War re-enactors will talk about the life of a soldier during the war and will demonstrate a firing of the fort's cannon. Admission is free. Jan. 13, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Fort Fisher State Historic Site, 1610 Fort Fisher Blvd., Kure Beach. For more information: friendsoffortfisher.com.

38th Annual North Carolina Jazz Festival

The North Carolina Jazz Festival is back in Wilmington and is featuring world-renowned musicians such as Dion Tucker, Jonathan Russell, Ed Polcer, Cynthia Sawyer, Rossano Portiello and others. There will be three nights of music, with a 15-member all-star jam session on Friday and Saturday nights. Settle in for 4 1/2 hours of top-notch jazz each evening. The Hilton Wilmington Riverside is hosting the festival and offering special rates to festival attendees. Tickets: $15-$225. Feb. 1-3, at 7:30 p.m. Hilton Wilmington Riverside, 301 North Water St., Wilmington. Info and tickets: ncjazzfestival.com.

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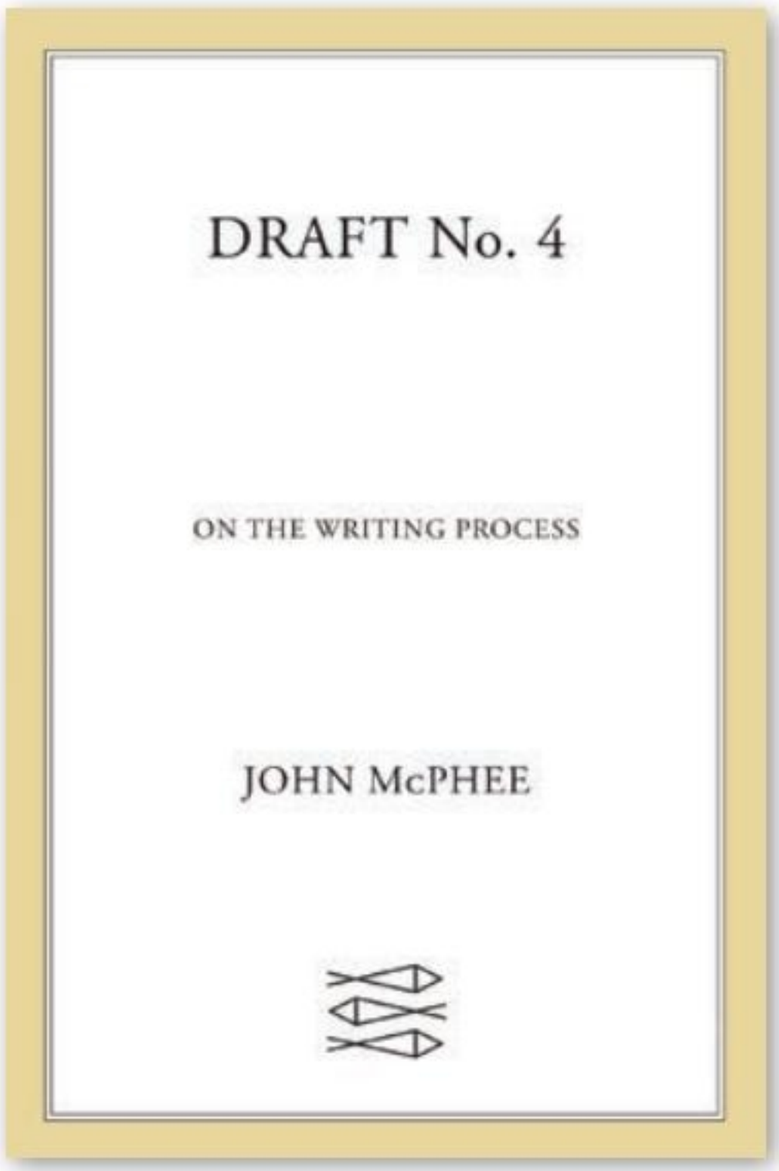

By Stephen E. Smith

In his latest book, *Draft No. 4: On the Writing Process*, John McPhee deconstructs the process he's spent a lifetime perfecting: writing on obscure subjects and delighting a discerning readership with technical explanations, entertaining narratives, and meticulous description, all of it couched in impeccable prose.

He begins by analyzing the most complex component of the writing process: structure. Using as an example his *New Yorker* article on the Pine Barrens, McPhee admits to spending two weeks lying on a picnic table in his backyard staring up into the branches and leaves and "fighting fear and panic" because he couldn't visualize a structure for the material he'd assembled. Years of extensive research — interviews, articles, books, personal observations, etc., all of it cataloged on coded note cards — had gone into the project, but he couldn't overcome the dread of banging out that first sentence and arranging the material in a readable form. Eventually, he overcame his writer's block and produced an article that morphed into the bestselling book, but the experience was painful — and instructive. In an attempt to convey the intricacies of the process, McPhee employs a series of drawings and diagrams that, unfortunately, do little to untangle the complexities of problems he'd confronted. But readers shouldn't be deterred. As with many of McPhee's books, there's a preliminary learning curve to overcome before landing on the safe side of abstraction.

In "Editors and Publishers," McPhee delves into the internal workings of *The New Yorker* and the publishing house of Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. His insider anecdotes are informative and humorous and include character sketches of the editors and editorial staff, affectionately detailing their eccentricities. "Mr. Shawn [editor of *The New Yorker*] actually seemed philosophical about its [an obscenity] presence in the language, but not in his periodical. My young daughters, evidently, were in no sense burdened as he was." He also contributes an anecdote concerning Shawn's objection to writers turning in copy about locations that were cold, such as Alaska or Newfoundland: "If he had an aversion to cold places it was as nothing beside his squeamishness in the virtual or actual presence of uncommon food" — although Shawn approved a McPhee proposal to write about eating road kill in rural Georgia.

In "Elicitation," he dispenses useful advice on the art of interviewing, citing as an example his experience with comedian Jackie Gleason. His description of "The Great One," bits and pieces of relevant detail — Gleason called everyone "pal" — creates a living and breathing facsimile of the comedian, and older readers will find themselves transported back to *The Honeymooners* and the loveable peccadilloes of the irascible Ralph Kramden. In a *Time* cover story on Sophia Loren, irony functions as description, succinctly capturing Loren's appeal: "Her feet are too big. Her nose is too long. Her teeth are uneven. She has the neck, as one of her rivals has put it, of 'a Neapolitan giraffe.' Her waist seems to begin in the middle of her thighs, and she has big, half-bushel hips. She runs like a fullback. Her hands are huge. Her forehead is low. Her mouth too large. And,

mamma mia, she is absolutely gorgeous."

Gleason and Loren notwithstanding, McPhee devotes an entire chapter to a discussion of "frame of reference," pieces of common knowledge that a writer employs to enhance a subject's comprehensibility. He cautions against using allusions that don't possess durability, warning that writers should never assume that anyone has seen a movie that might be used as an allusion. "In the archives of ersatz reference," he writes, "that one [movies] is among the fattest folders." He notes that popular culture changes with such rapidity that it's dangerous for a writer to conclude that any allusion carries the weight of meaning necessary to elucidate a subject. To prove his point, McPhee polled his Princeton students using references such as Paul Newman, Fort Knox, Cassius Clay, Rupert Murdoch and discovered that the majority of his undergrads registered a low degree of recognition — and when it came to identifying Peckham Rye, Churchill Downs, Jack Dempsey, George Plimpton, and Mort Sahl, his students were blissfully ignorant.

In his final chapter, McPhee again confronts writer's block. In a note written to a frustrated student, he suggests a remedy: "Sometimes in a nervous frenzy I just fling words as if I were flinging mud at a wall. Blurt out, heave out, babble out something — anything — as a first draft. With that you've achieved a sort of nucleus. Then, as you work it over and alter it, you begin to shape sentences that score higher with eye and ear."

If there's a fault with McPhee's writing, and it's difficult to find even the smallest gaffe, it's an occasional touch of the dictionary disease: demonym, multiguously, bibulation, horripilation, etc. — words that will force the reader to touch his index finger to the Kindle screen, or God forbid, crack open a dictionary.

McPhee is straightforward, practical, and illustrative, detailing the struggles serious writers endure on a daily basis and pointing out, finally, that creativity is the product of what the writer chooses to write about, how he approaches the subject and arranges the material, the skill he demonstrates in describing characters, the kinetic energy of the prose, and the extent to which the reader can visualize the characters and story. As always, he writes with grace and charm, and *Draft No. 4* earns a niche on the bookshelf next to Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*, the *Harbrace College Handbook*, *Writing Down the Bones*, *Roget's International Thesaurus*, and the *OED*.

Stephen E. Smith is a retired professor and the author of seven books of poetry and prose. He's the recipient of the Poetry Northwest Young Poet's Prize, the Zoe Kincaid Brockman Prize for poetry and four North Carolina Press awards.

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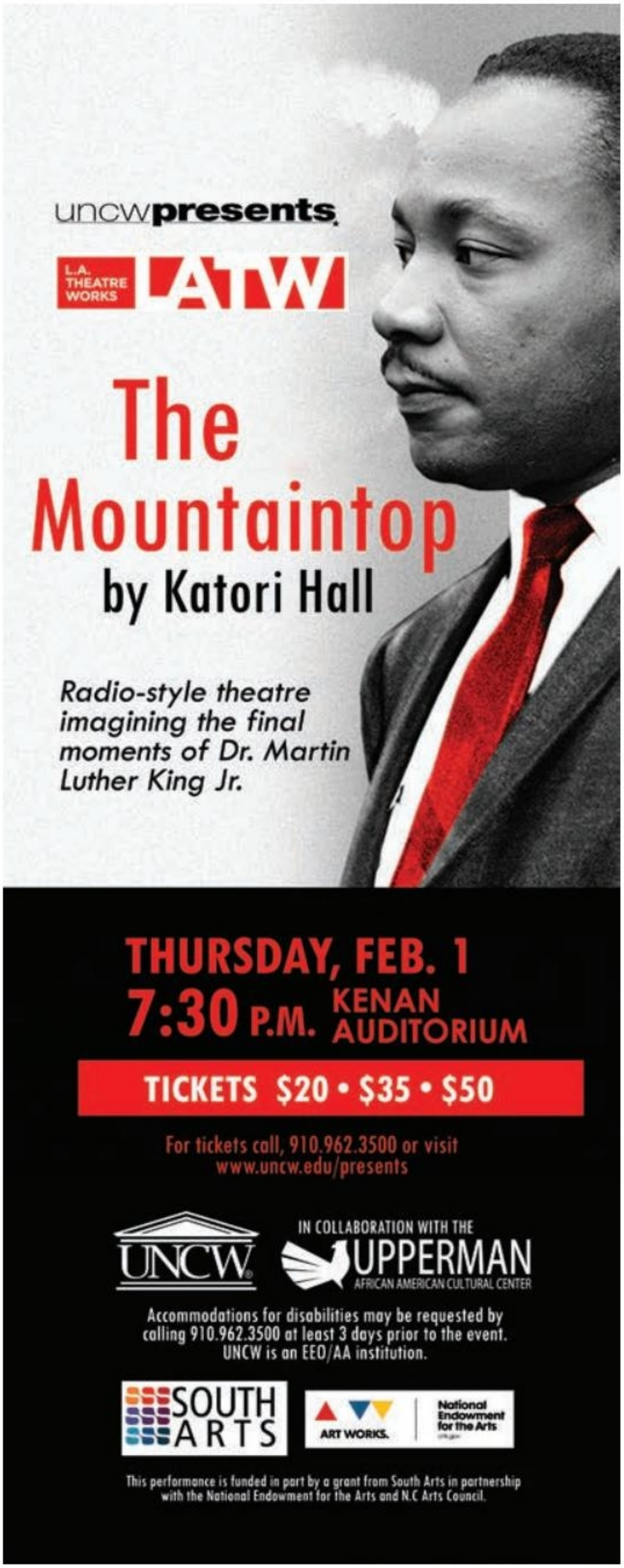
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Fostering A Healthy Lifestyle in 2018
Presented by: Lori Harris, Chief Marketing Officer, Clean Eatz
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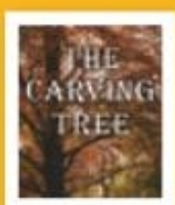
Join us for a 30 minute presentation on clean eating, macros, and inspirations for healthy eating habits. Includes Q & A, sampling, socializing, and meal plan sign-ups.
RSVP by Friday, January 19th

Voices of Recovery Series: Part 1
"The Art of Recovery": The Role of Artistic Expression
Presented by: Debra Kindervatter, Certified Peer Support Specialist Recovery Resource Center Inc.
Thursday, January 25th, 2018, 2 P.M.
An art curator, now an advocate for those with mental illness, shares how a bipolar episode caused a step back, her recovery, and skills gained. Learn how therapeutic art and journaling helps mental wellness.
RSVP by Wednesday, January 24th

"The Mermaid" - Book Review/Signing
Presented by: Shane Scollins, Author
Wednesday, January 31st, 2018, 2 P.M.
A local author of over 10 novels will review his newest novel, set in and around Fort Fisher and Carolina Beach. Including Q & A, book signing and information on his inspiration in creating his best-selling fiction.
RSVP by Monday, January 29th

"Wide Eyes": A War Orphan Discovers Her Birth Identity - Book Review/Signing
Marija Platace Futchs Fine, Author
Wednesday, February 7th, 2018, 2 P.M.
A war orphan discovers her birth identity seven decades after being separated from her mother in German-occupied Latvia. Hear about the events between 1944 until her arrival in the U.S. in 1949 and the "family detective" who unlocked her story in 2014. Includes remarks on the positive outcome of her story.
RSVP by Friday, February 2nd



"The Carving Tree" - Book Review/Signing
Terry Bowman, Author
Monday, February 12th, 2018, 2 P.M.
Join us as we hear about two women's courage and resilience in this captivating Christian novel.
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"From Heartache to Healing": One Woman's Journey to New Beginnings
Presented by: Mary Crawford, Certified Peer Support Specialist Recovery Resource Center Inc.
Monday, February 26th, 2018, 2 P.M.
How do you and the inner strength to turn your life around after losing everything? Share in the loss, grief, addiction, and coping skills that helped Mary stay in recovery and led to new beginnings.
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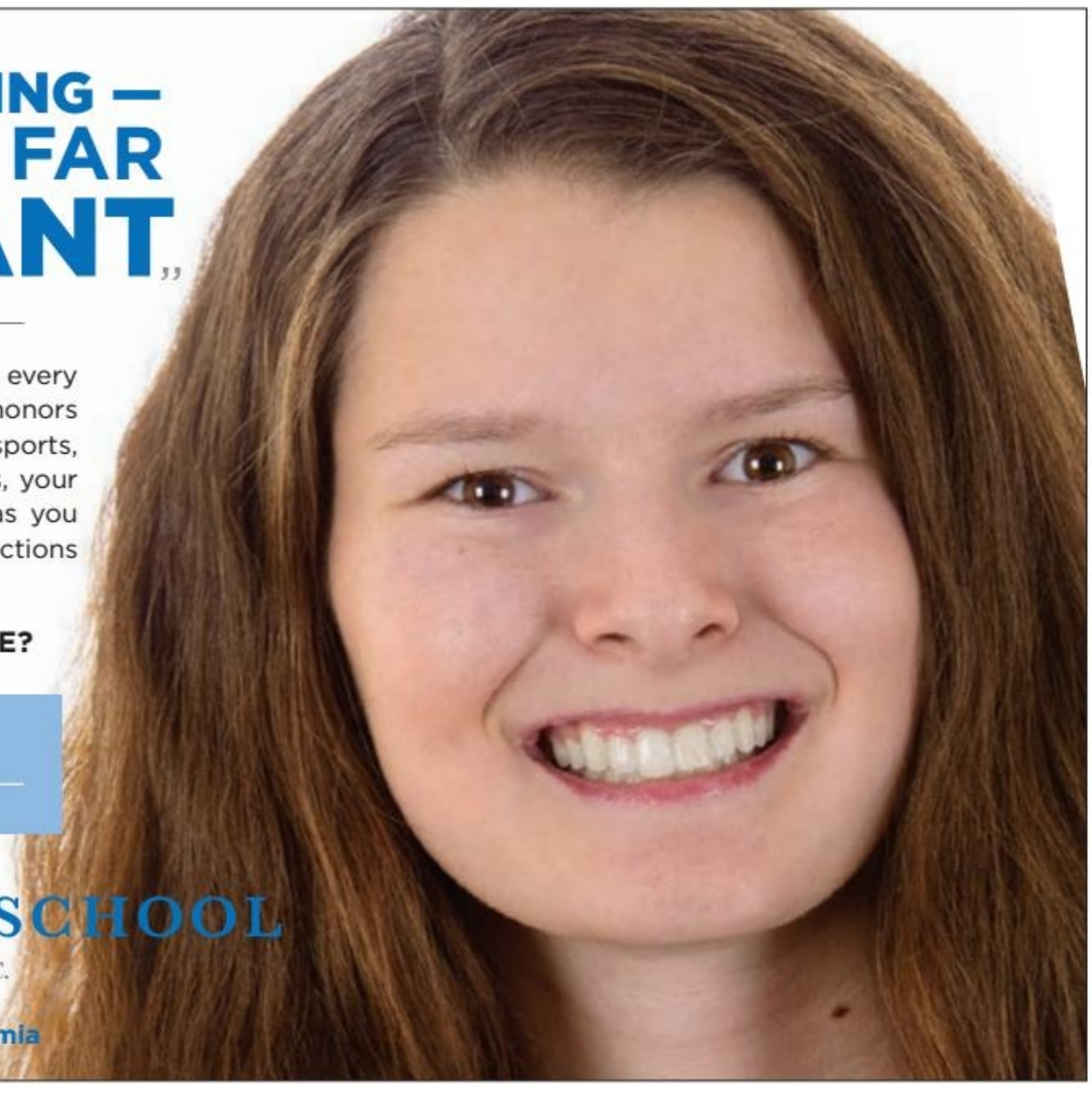

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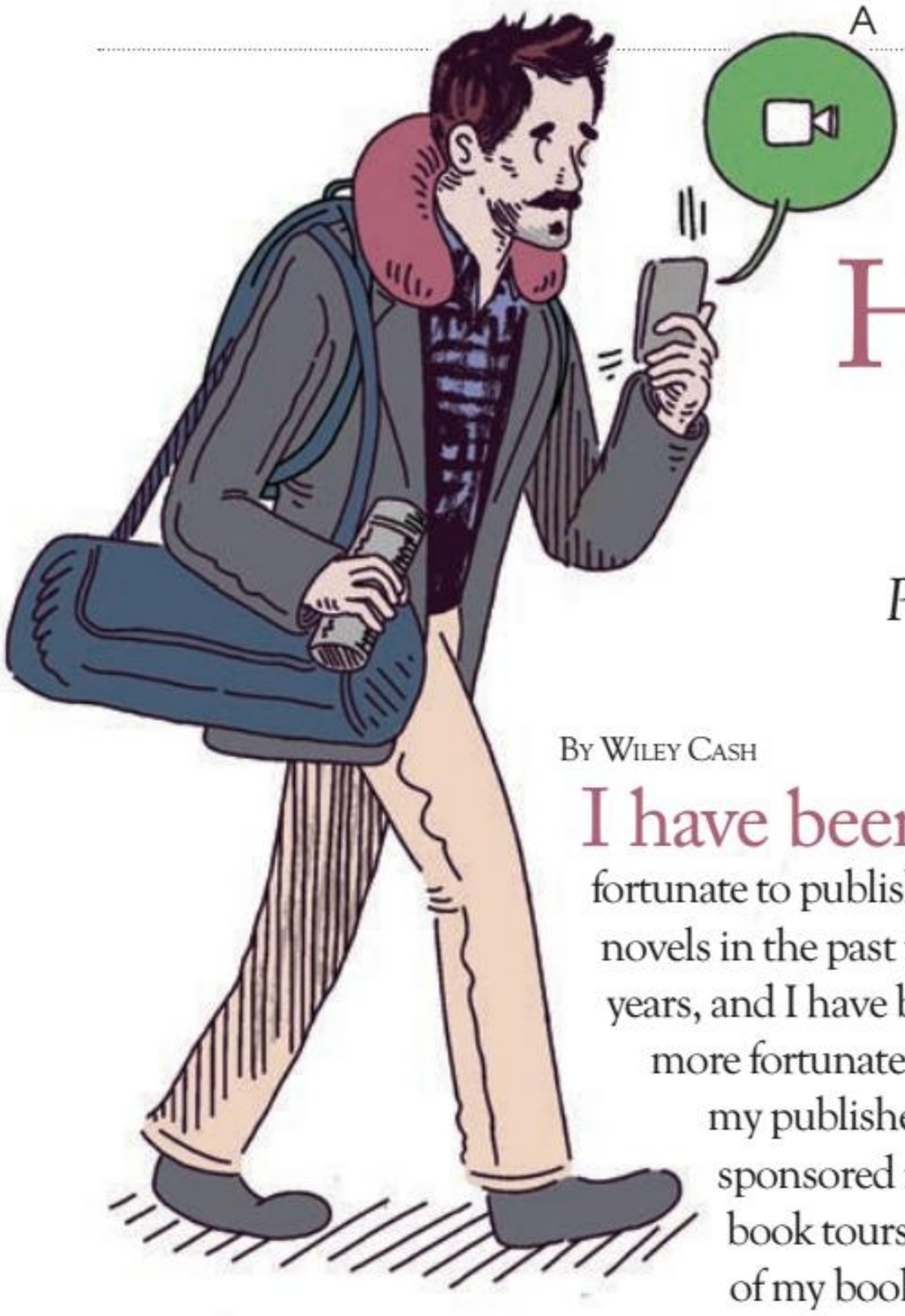


How to Survive a Book Tour

Patience, planning and a sense of serenity

By Wiley Cash

I have been fortunate to publish three novels in the past five years, and I have been even more fortunate that my publisher has sponsored national book tours for each of my books. After the years it takes to write and publish a novel — much of that time spent in solitude and self-doubt — it is very rewarding to visit a bookstore, library or college campus and meet people who have read your work. I love hitting the road to answer questions, sign books and learn what readers are reading when they are not reading my books. When I first sat down to write my debut novel, I never imagined I would be so fortunate.

For my most recent tour in support of *The Last Ballad*, I spent almost two full months on the road, most of it alone. The wonderful time spent with readers is only a fraction of what you do when you are on book tour. The vast majority of your time is spent running through airports, eating fast food late at night, lying awake in hotel rooms, missing your family and wondering if — in the end — the grind of the road helps book sales. This essay is about how to survive those many long, lonely moments.

Here are a few steps you can take to overcome the perils of the book tour. I ask you to keep in mind that this is what has worked for me. Because of many factors, a book tour is not the same experience for everyone; this is based only on mine.

Gear: If you will be taking any flights longer than an hour, consider getting a neck pillow. Yes, they are awkward to pack and you will look silly carrying it through the airport, but nothing is more awkward or silly than your head lolling against your seatmate's shoulder or your chin bouncing against your chest while you fight sleep in midair. A vacuum-sealed, stainless-steel thermos also comes in handy: It will keep water cool and coffee hot for hours while you travel. You may also want to invest in an extra phone charger with a long cord. Outlets in hotels are often located behind the headboard or bedside table, and a long cord makes it easy to charge your phone and use it as an alarm clock without moving furniture in your room. Finally, take a book, and make sure to take a book you actually want to read instead of a book you think you should be reading.

Airport: Always check your bag if your host or publisher is paying for your travel because book tours can be long, and a day off from lugging your luggage is a gift. Otherwise, find a carry-on bag that holds a lot of stuff and is easy to transport. After checking your bag, empty your pockets *before* security and put everything except your ID and boarding pass into one of the small, zippered compartments on your carry-on luggage. There is nothing more annoying than standing at security while people empty their pockets before going through the metal detector. The same people will hold up the line on the other side of security while spending even longer putting everything back into their pockets. Do not be that person. For the same reason, wear shoes that are easy to slip off and on, and go ahead and take your laptop out of your bag. If you find yourself holding up the security line for any reason, do not be cute about it. The security line is not an open mic. There is nothing cute or funny about wasting people's time when they are rushing to catch a flight.

Food: Except for in a few cities, the food is irredeemably bad at most airports. There is no way around this. I have no suggestions to make about airport food except to avoid it if you can. Once you arrive at your destination, spend a few minutes scouting around online for good food that is nearby. When eating on the road, I walk a fine line between finding something convenient and fast while also wanting to have a distinct culinary experience. If I am in Austin I want to have the best barbecue. If I am in New Orleans I want to have the best gumbo. If I am in New England I want to have the best clam chowder. Keep in mind that "the best" does not always mean the "most famous." Trust the people at the bookstore and hotel when it comes to food. They are locals. They know. There is also no judgment, at least not from me, for eating cheap pizza or a quick sandwich. You will often find yourself short on time, and settling on something simple is an easy way to make quick decisions. A book tour is not a vacation, and you cannot plan to eat like you are on vacation.

Hotel: I have a particular routine when I check into hotels. I like to feel settled, so if I am staying for more than one night I unpack the necessary clothes and place them in drawers, and then I put my shaving kit on the bathroom counter before stashing my luggage in the closet. Then I turn on the television (CNN or ESPN) and iron the shirts and pants I plan to wear. I always iron during leisure time because there is nothing more hectic than ironing as you are preparing to rush out to a bookstore or catch a taxi to the airport. Clothes unpacked and ironed, I unplug the alarm clock by the bed. If you do not do this you can plan on it going off at 5:00 a.m. and being unable to figure out how to stop it. Go ahead and unplug it and set the alarm on your cellphone. No outlets close to the bedside table? Thank goodness you have your extra-long cord for the charger. Are you a coffee drinker? Most hotels have in-room coffee makers with coffee available. Some hotels have free coffee in the lobby. No matter what the setup, avoid

ILLUSTRATION BY ROMEY PETITE

Styrofoam cups because coffee served in Styrofoam cups is an offense to humanity that cannot be forgiven. I know of a few writers who pack their favorite mugs along with fresh coffee and French presses. This is not a bad idea.

Family: I have traveled with my family, and I have traveled without my family. It is easier to travel without my family, especially if we are staying in one hotel room, but it is also very lonely. To offset said loneliness I will often FaceTime with my wife and our girls. This inevitably ends with one child or another wanting to hold the phone while the other child gets upset, which inevitably ends with the phone being dropped or hung up or repossessed by my wife. Everyone gets off the phone feeling a little sadder and more frustrated than before the call. Sometimes I find it better to have my wife text me photos of herself with our daughters, and she posts many of these on Instagram so I can flip through them before bed. But I always go to bed feeling a little sad. I often wonder if it would be easier and less frustrating just to hear their voices instead of seeing their faces.

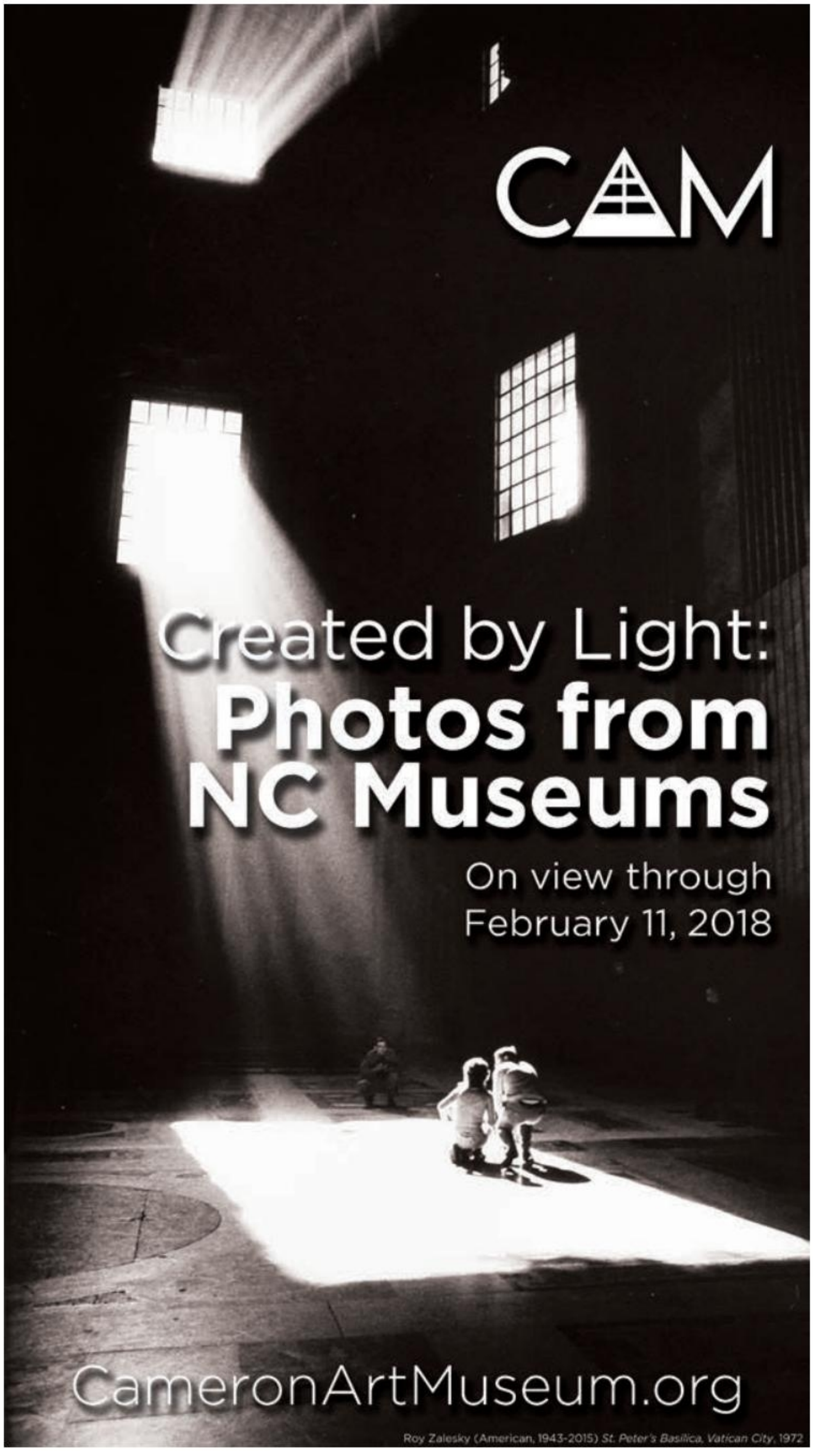
For me, the easiest part of book tour is standing in front of a group of readers and discussing my book. The hardest parts are being away from my family and the constant feeling that I am running late for the next thing, whether that thing is a flight, a reservation, an interview or ride.

But a book tour can also feature pleasant surprises that masquerade as disappointments. At the end of the most recent tour I was on the way home from out west when I missed a flight in Salt Lake City due to fog. It was noon, and the next flight that could get me home to Wilmington would not leave until midnight, and I would have to connect in Atlanta and would not arrive home until late the following morning. After getting my new tickets I had two options: sulk in the airport all day or go out and see something of Salt Lake City, a place I had never visited before.

I caught a cab into the city and had an incredible day. I visited the King's English, one of the most iconic bookstores in the country. I had lunch and a beer at a local brewery. I visited the Mormon Temple downtown, and I ended the day with an impromptu decision to catch a Utah Jazz game before catching the train back to the airport.

It was an exhausting day that had begun with great disappointment, but it ended in joy and the certainty that despite how long I had been away and how far I was from North Carolina, I was headed back to my wife and children. I unzipped my backpack, removed my neck pillow, and settled in for the long flight(s) home.

Wiley Cash lives in Wilmington with his wife and their two daughters. His new novel The Last Ballad *is available wherever books are sold.*



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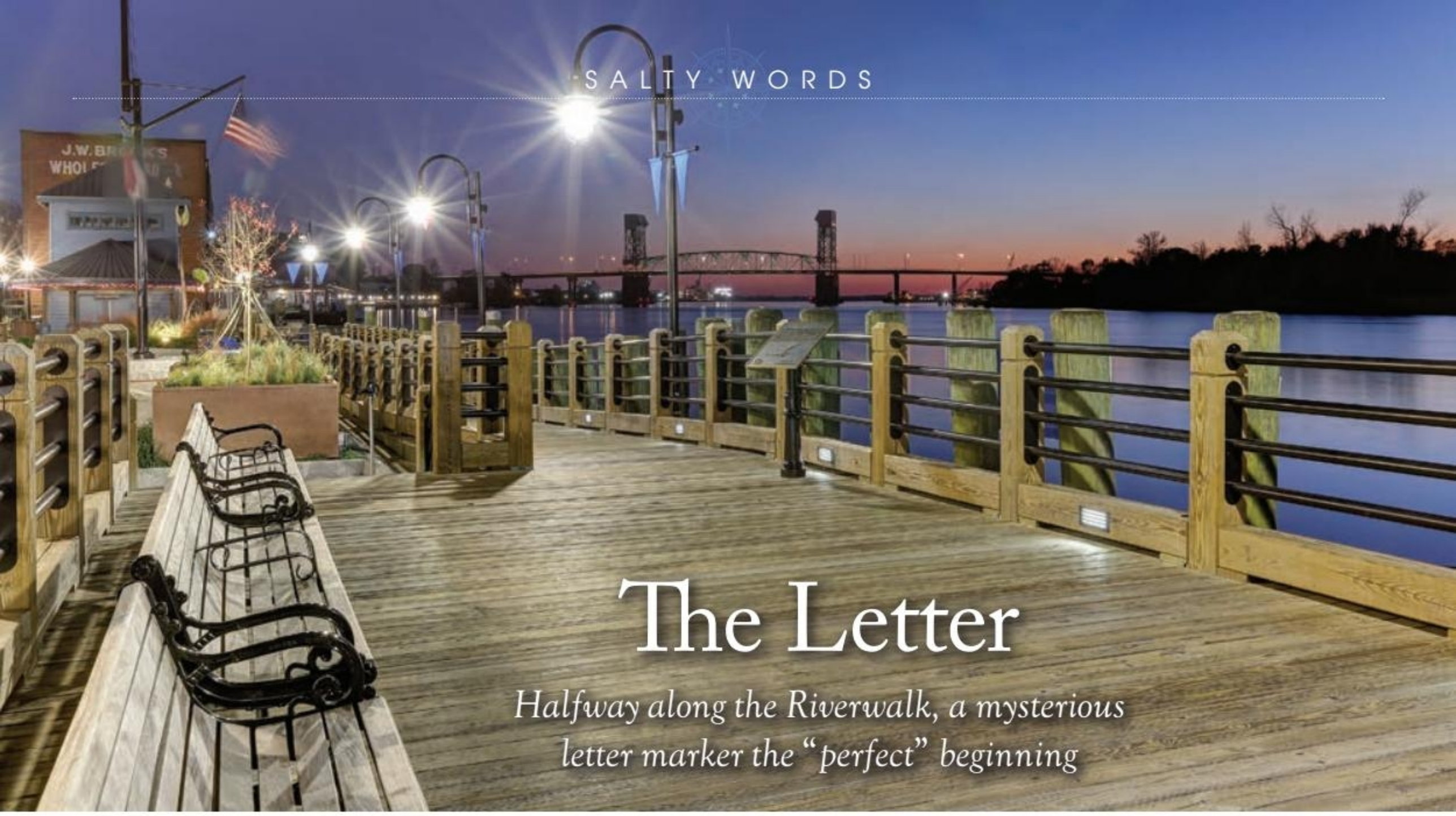

The Letter

Halfway along the Riverwalk, a mysterious letter marker the "perfect" beginning

By Jillian Weiss

Along the Wilmington Riverwalk, opposite the Battleship U.S.S. North Carolina, the letter "P" is painted in black on the ledge between the walkway and the river. The letter is about the size of an adult footprint and is hardly visible in the evening, light from the nearest lampposts barely reaching it.

I found the letter after watching *Magic in the Moonlight* at Thalian Hall. During the movie, the handsome graduate student I'd recently begun dating held my hand for the first time. He was nervous, he told me later. He didn't know how I would react. After the film, we walked down to the river and discovered the "P," and wondered what it could mean. We sat with the letter between us, holding hands, and dangling our feet over the water, like children.

The handsome student and I met in Wilmington, but we had both lived in many different cities. He had lived in Small Town, Oregon; Small Town, Idaho; and San Sebastian, Spain. I had lived my childhood in Winston-Salem, my adolescence in London, and my college years in Elon. I had spent summers in Prague, Czech Republic; Sherman, Texas; and Memphis, Tennessee. I was better at moving than I was at building a home. By chance, we had come to live in Wilmington at the same time. When we started dating, he had lived there for two years and I had lived there for one. Our houses were at opposite ends of the Riverwalk and the "P" became our meeting point. It was the perfect place to watch the sun set behind the battleship, the sky blushing like a teenager embarrassed by their own beauty. To our left, headlights sailed across the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge and the windows of tugboats glowed. Water gently licked the ledge below us.

Sometimes, we'd launch our kayaks near the bridge and glide past our spot with the letter. Then we'd paddle up to the battleship, take our feet from their plastic burrows, place them atop the kayaks, and stare up at the ship's gray towers and billowing flags. We also crept into the skinny, marshy waterways, the frayed edges of the Cape Fear.

As we kayaked, I knew that beneath us on the river floor slept trunks of longleaf pine. In the 1900s, trunks were bound together in rafts and floated down the Cape Fear to various area sawmills. Some logs, called "sinkers," fell into the river during transport and have been there since. As we kayaked, I imagined them to be anchors for our boats, but anchors with enormously long chains that allowed us to move freely. Even when we were not near the river, I felt a force pulling me in its direction.

One cold January evening, the handsome student proposed to me as we stood beside the "P."

He asked, "What does the 'P' stand for?"

I made a few guesses.

He said, "It stands for, Please, will you marry me?"

In the next month, we began searching for wood from the sinkers. Eventually, a company that gathered and restored them for furniture and flooring handed my fiancé a free cut of wood, which he then mailed off to a man in Oklahoma to be made into a wedding ring.

It fits him well. The band is half a centimeter thick, and the delicate grain of the pine is visible from beneath a polished layer of gloss. A slim strip of copper runs around the band, slicing the pine into two pieces, and makes the ring shine. He wears it now, though the copper inlay has turned green, as we sit in our apartment on the opposite side of the country, where the sun strangely sets into the ocean instead of rising from it. Though months after our wedding we had to move, once again, I feel the faint tug of the sinkers trying to pull us home.

Award-winning writer, Jillian Weiss earned an MFA from UNCW. This is her first story for Salt. *She lives in Portland, Oregon.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

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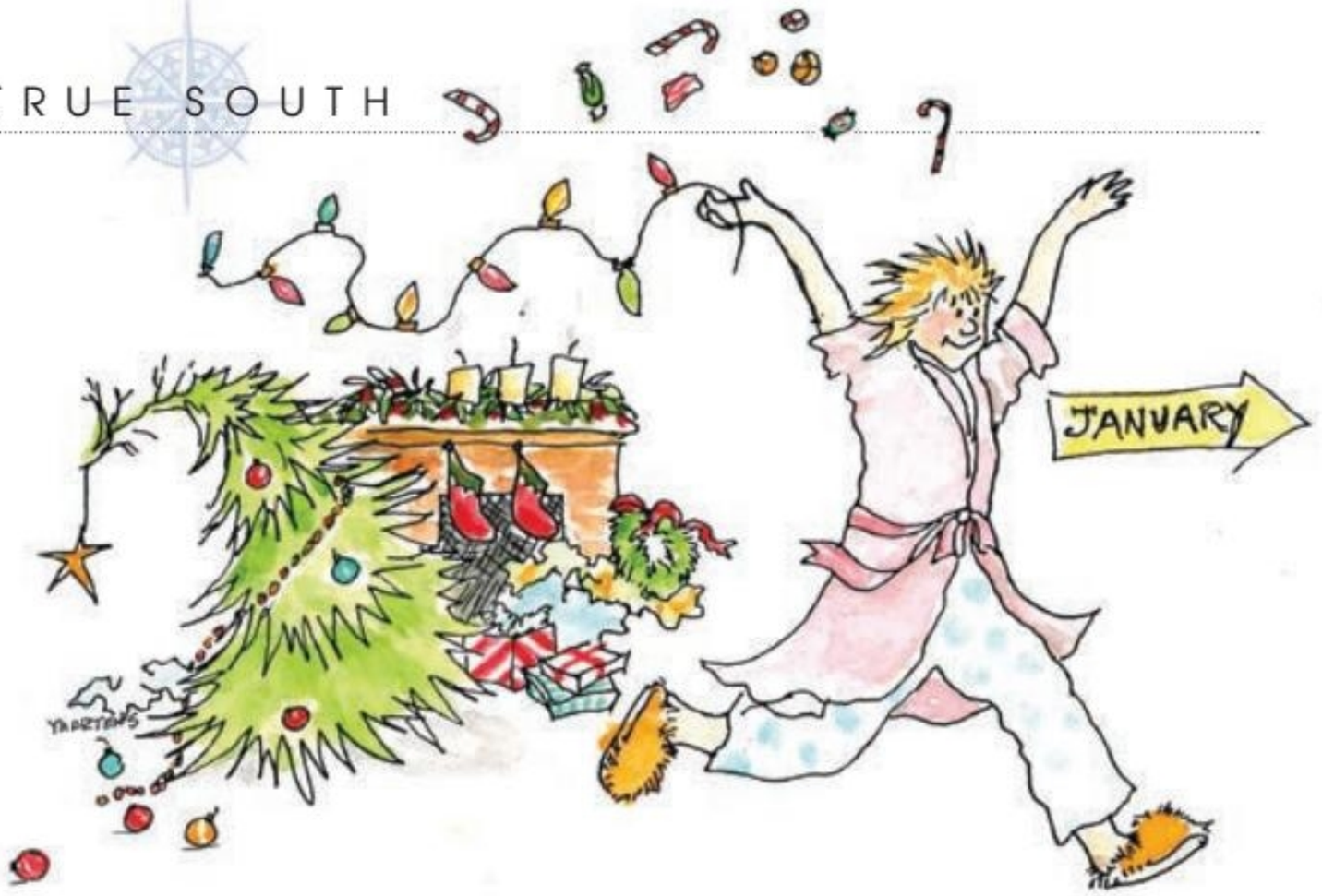

By Susan S.Kelly

I speak now for that silent minority who fear to voice, confess, or admit their glad anticipation for, their deep abiding love for, their eternal gratitude for . . . January. Believe ye: there are those of us who crave every endless 31 days of a month so roundly dreaded by so many.

Bring it, baby.

For quad-A overachievers, list-makers, and borderline OCD peeps like myself, January is the season of somnolence, of letting go. For over-organized souls, nothing beats a full-on month of . . . nothing.

No holidays, and therefore no searching, purchasing, wrapping, hiding. No candy. No centerpieces. No costumes or cocktails. No (unspoken but acknowledged) competing for best dessert or coleslaw or fireworks or slalom or Easter basket or parade float. Personal bonus: no family birthdays.

No yard work. Everything is leafless, hideous, and charmless, and with any luck, will stay that way for six more weeks. The only outdoor chore is filling the feeder. No to-dos of raking, mowing — it's too early to even prune. Nothing needs fertilizing, watering. Even kudzu is temporarily tamed to a crinkled, wrinkled weed. I'm so thankful it's too early to force quince or forsythia; no sense of obligation there, and if you still force narcissus, I have a collection of lovely forcing vases and trays and even the rocks that you're welcome to. Sorry, but I need to hold on to the gin that stiffens the stems. And I love my roses, but, boy, do I love when they're whacked off and not producing, and therefore not accusing me of leaving them to grow blowsy and frowsy rather than cutting and delivering them to someone whose life, living room, and outlook would be improved by — oh, never mind. I may be the only person you know who gets depressed when the first bulbs begin blooming.

No fundraisers on PBS. This is huge.

Nothing at the farmer's market equals absolution from waking early to haul yourself there, and trying to fairly spread your vegetable benevolence to several farmers with pleading eyes. Nothing edible locally means seasonal broccoli and citrus with unknown origins are just fine. As for other aspects of eating, in January it's practically unpatriotic not to exist on semi-solid foodstuffs straight from your Crock-Pot. Go ahead, add another packet of taco mix to that pork butt, onion soup mix to that chuck roast, chili mix to that ground beef. Dow, Inc. knows: Better living through chemicals.

No campaigns, primaries, elections. No yard signs. No door-to-door, 'cause it's too cold for solicitors, and if you haven't gotten your subscriptions and wrapping paper by now, sorry. And altar guilds everywhere — Rejoice! and God *rest* ye merry gentlemen and women — no need for changing altar hangings and linens. Even at church, once you get past Epiphany, there's a nice long stretch of nothing until the deprivations of Lent. As for resolutions, by mid-month they're mostly moot, admit it.

Within the narrow demographic of January adorers, there's an even smaller contingent: the snow lovers. For those of us dreamers, hopers, prayers and devotees of white stuff, January is the month during which those fervent desires are most likely to be fulfilled. For those who disloyally decamp for sunny Southern climes, desert isles, and ski slopes, all the better. Less car and foot traffic to mar the peaceful white perfection of a snowfall. Sorry, dear, I couldn't get to the grocery store for supper supplies. Feel free to scrape whatever's left in the . . . Crock-Pot.

It occurs to me that, were I ever to get a face-lift, January would be an opportune time.

Isn't it divine to go to the movies and catch up on all those blockbusters you missed and get just the seat you want? Because no one else is there. Plus, you're exonerated from even *going* to the movies: Everybody knows nothing Oscar-worthy is released between January and March.

Not that I encourage sloth, far from it. January is the month made for domestic industries, with the iPod blasting in your ears and no fear of anyone catching you atonally belting tunes with Justin Timberlake or Taylor Swift. Consolidate coupons, cull the catalogs, schedule your spanking, sparkling pristine new calendar with all the birthdays you forgot last year. Polish silver. Then, transfer your earbuds to your laptop, scoot your socked feet to the fire, and proceed to unabashedly binge Netflix, knowing you've earned and are entitled to The Right to Relax.

Oh, poor despised, derided month, that span of gloom and chill, so scorned and shunned by humanity, I'll be there for you, bundled and content, cheering you on. Hermits, unite. We knew what Oscar Wilde really was referring to when he uttered, "the love that dare not speak its name" — we few, we happy few, who wallow, with glee, in January.

Susan Kelly is a blithe spirit, author of several novels, and proud new grandmother.

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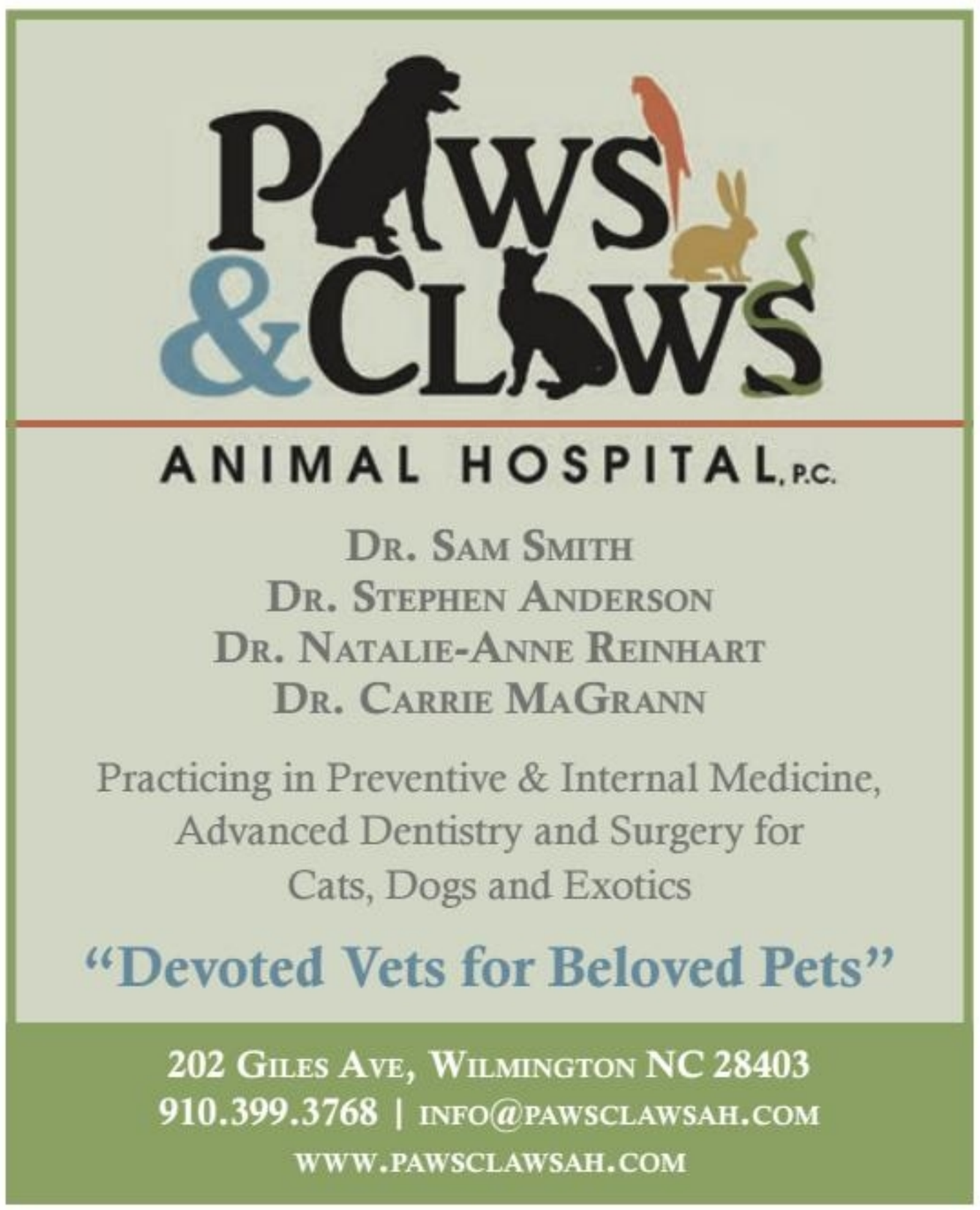
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How to Build a Life

Jimmy Pierce, the founder of Kids Making It, and Austin Wilson, one of his star woodworkers, talk about the journey from Castle Street to This Old House

By Dana Sachs

One day last summer, 18-year-old Austin Wilson stood in the basement of a 19th-century house in Newton, Massachusetts, pondering an HVAC system that he had to remove from the premises. Austin was an intern on the crew renovating the home, and the supervisor had asked the interns to haul the entire HVAC out of the building. But how could they get it out?

Oh, and a camera crew was filming the renovation for the PBS television show *This Old House*.

The story of how Austin, a 2017 graduate of New Hanover High School, ended up on *This Old House* is not just the story of one young man's passion for building. It is also the story of how a small Wilmington nonprofit — Kids Making It — gave Austin the skills he needed to join the team of the PBS show. And it is the story of how Jimmy Pierce, the founder of Kids Making It, decided that when children have a passion, they can grow up to become "incredibly successful in life."

Back in 1996, Kids Making It, or KMI, first offered woodworking classes to children as a pilot project through the Wilmington Housing Authority. Jimmy, a practicing attorney at the time, started the program after asking himself a basic question: "What would I do in life if I could do anything?"

"Woodworking" was his answer. He loved carpentry because "you go into a zone and time melts away." But Jimmy also craved deeper satisfaction, so he decided to teach these skills to children, who could learn it as "an equal-opportunity enjoyment."

Jimmy, Austin and I are sitting at a table at Jamaica's Comfort Zone. Over lunch, Jimmy explains that KMI began as a one-week after-school program for students who "came from families that struggled one way or another." KMI gave kids a chance to use hammers and saws, nail wood together, even build go-carts. The students loved it, but the housing authority staff had reservations because the project offered very limited hours. "You have to keep coming back," they suggested. "If all these kids get is 12 hours over six weeks, you'll just be another do-gooder coming in — a fond distant memory for them."

Jimmy took that advice to heart. In 1996, he left the practice of law and by 2000 was able to establish KMI as a permanent program. He now tells kids, "You can stay forever." Over the past 18 years, KMI has graduated thousands of students from its workshops. Some have entered building professions and trades, while others have gone on to community college and university.

Austin Wilson first walked into KMI's shop on Water Street back in 2011, when he was 12. Jimmy immediately noticed his potential. "He was one of those kids you didn't have to worry about." On one project, Austin built a wooden wall-mounted shelf entirely out of hexagon shapes. "It would have been a lot easier," Jimmy says, "to have made it out of rectangles. Instead, he spent five times as long."

Jimmy pulls out his phone and, heads together, he and Austin scroll through photos until they find one of Austin with his hexagonal shelf. It is geometric perfection — sturdy and stylish at the same time. "He sets challenges for himself that are not easy at all," Jimmy says, staring at the photo. "Not easy at all." When *This Old House* announced its internship program, Jimmy thought of Austin.

As it happened, Austin loved the show already. "It was so cool to see (a

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW SHERMAN

house) one way in the beginning," he tells me. "Then the renovations. How it changed was a whole other picture."

But being on the program himself? The novice woodworker had to check with his mom, Tracy-ann. She had always taught him to work hard — "She's never been one to give up," he tells me — but applying for *This Old House* was something entirely new for both of them. Austin had never left home, lived by himself, or flown on an airplane. The internship would require him to live far away for a whole summer.

"Let's just ask her," Jimmy suggested.

Tracy-ann did not respond with enthusiasm, but she did let him apply. And when the television producers chose her son out of hundreds of applicants, she packed him up, drove him to the airport, and kissed him goodbye. For Austin, her support means everything. "I wouldn't be where I am without my mom," he says.

Tracy-ann is half Jamaican, and our meal at Jamaica's Comfort Zone reminds Austin of his grandmother's cooking. The menu reflects Jamaica's history as a cultural crossroads, and popular items include indigenous stews, West Indian curries, and dishes cooked with spices that originated in Mexico and South America. The coconut shrimp combines tropical flavor with the crunch of flash-fried Chinese seafood, the fish's mild sweetness playing off the rush of honey mustard sauce ("I'd like to try these at home," Austin says). The vegetable patties, as savory as Indian samosas, remind Jimmy, a North Carolina native, of "one of my all-time favorite comfort foods — this is pot pie with a kick and a great flaky crust."

Roti, a delicate flatbread from Trinidad and Tobago, becomes, in Jamaican cooking, the outer shell of a hearty wrap. We try the vegetarian version, which is stuffed with "rice 'n peas" (a mix of rice, kidney beans and coconut milk), cooked cabbage and callaloo, a stewed leafy vegetable. Topped with crushed garbanzo beans and served with jerk sauce, the dish has satisfying heft and a mellow tang.

In Massachusetts, Austin had to cook for himself and work long hours on the contracting crew. "We were framing and flooring," he says. "We even had to put the roof up, and shingles." The renovation supervisor encouraged

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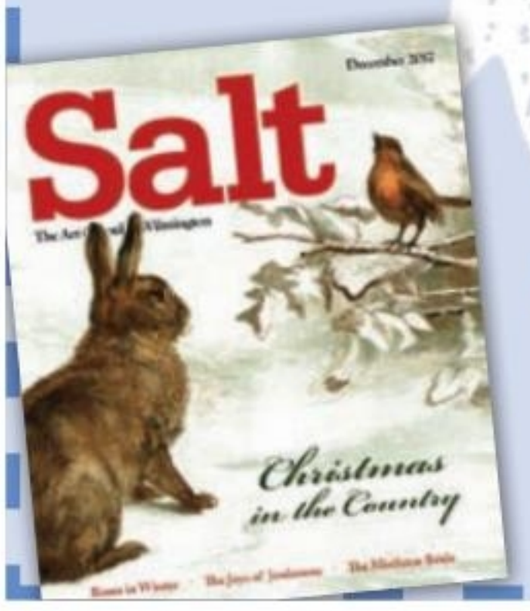

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the interns to plan before starting any project. "It's not always going to turn out exactly as you planned," Austin says. "But it's going to turn out better than if you didn't plan it."

So, I ask, how did the interns extricate that HVAC unit from the basement of the house?

It's Jimmy who responds first. "Wasn't that one of those 'planning' times?" he asks gently.

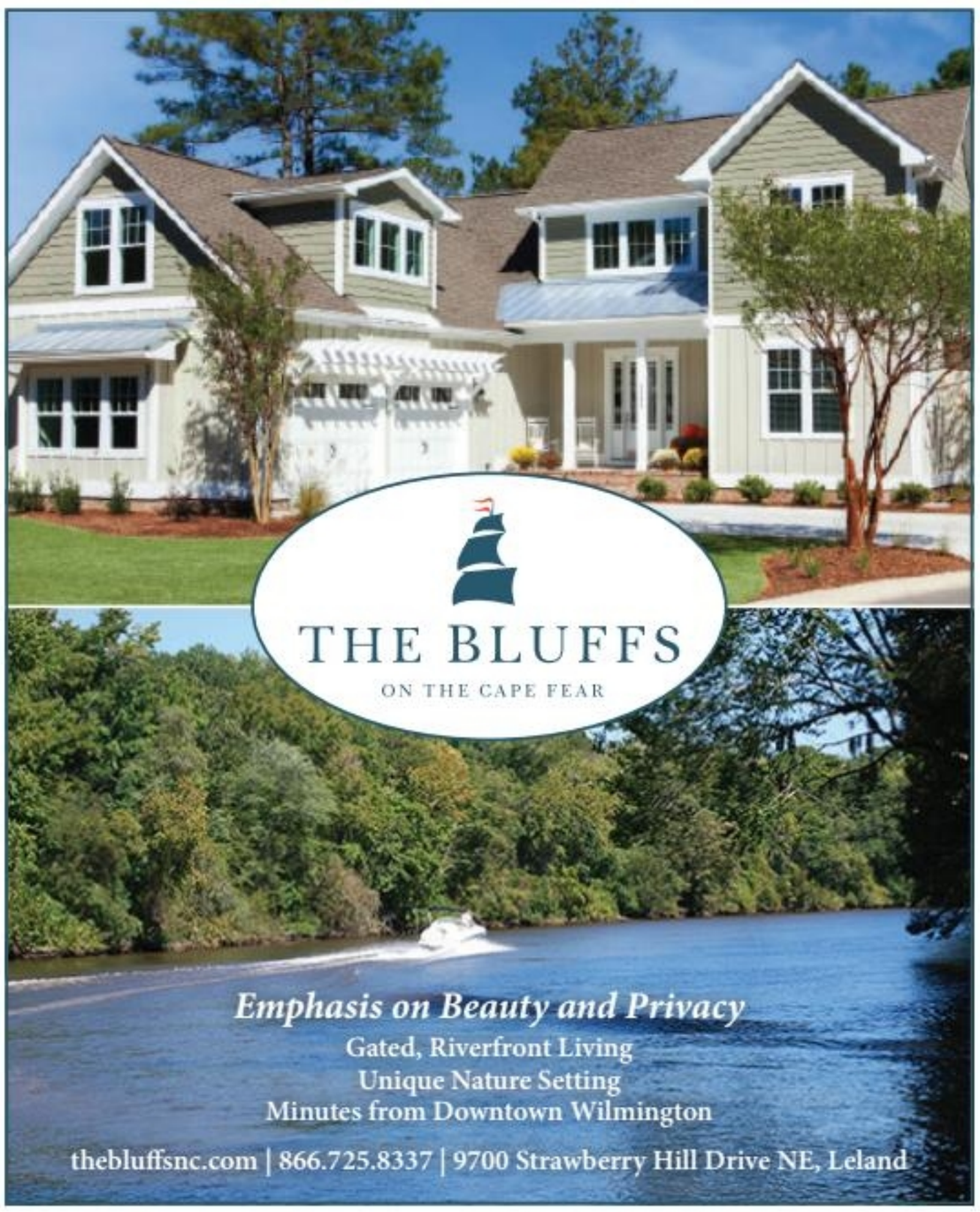
Austin turns to his mentor and grins. "Yeah," he says, then goes on to describe how the interns "figured it out together," dismantling the entire system, then hauling the pieces outside.

These days, Austin is studying construction management at Cape Fear Community College, and as he speaks I can see the pride he takes in his accomplishments. But that's nothing compared to the expression on the face of Jimmy Pierce.

He's glowing.

Jamaica's Comfort Zone is located at 417 South College Road, No. 24. For more information, call (910) 399-2867 or visit www.jamaicascomfortzone.net. Kids Making It, a 501(c)3 nonprofit, has its woodworking shop at 617 Castle St. You can also find it on the web at kidsmakingit.org.

Dana Sachs's latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores, online and throughout Wilmington.*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The Shaman of the Sea

For Reid Stowe – artist, adventurer, history-making sailor – the world's oceans are his home and source of his inspiration

By John Wolfe · Photographs by Andrew Sherman

Mystical visions carry him across the sea.

On the open ocean, the view is the same in every direction: The white-hot sun beams its light through the cobalt sky, cascading through dynamic clouds to meet the shimmering horizon at the far edge of the heaving lapis lazuli water. Out there, where the sublime simplicity and scale of the ocean erase everything else, ideas and visions take on new weight. Thoughts become all you have. In a state of ecstatic bliss, working with devoted hands and love in his heart, Reid Stowe carves conjured images into wood on the open water, alone with his thoughts.

Stowe is an artist, an adventurer and a world-record-holding endurance sailor whose epic 1,152-day nonstop voyage around the globe made history when he completed it in 2010. His sailing, and his art — the two have always been intertwined — began long before that odyssey, however; as a young man he voyaged on small boats across vast oceans, painting, carving and sculpting along the way. His first sculptures were figureheads for his boats, carved, he said, "because I needed the gods to take care of me." His courses took him through the South Pacific and up the Amazon River — he admits that he "spent the better part of (his) life in the wild." While still in his early 20s, he touched four continents on a little wooden catamaran he built at his family beach house in Ocean Isle Beach.

In 1978 he finished building his 70-foot gaff-rigged schooner, *Anne*, on which he would eventually break records. The first port he made from North Carolina was the Caribbean island of Dominica. Hurricane David had recently felled tropical hardwood trees; Stowe harvested these to craft the fine carpentry work that covers the boat's interior. In the years that followed, as Anne's hull tracked over the tranquil turquoise of the Caribbean, through the iceberg-studded seas around Antarctica, and across the staggering storm-gray mountains that billow around Cape Horn in the great Southern Ocean, Stowe hammered and chiseled, transforming his boat's cabin walls and bulkheads into a floating gallery.

In the galley, mahogany mahimahi charge from the water, chasing wide-winged flying fish. An ornate Oriental dragon, with textured scales that ripple like waves, guards the library in the cargo hold. On the golden walls of the

pilothouse, beside the worn ship's wheel and the much-used chart table, there are tropical beach scenes and triple-masted clipper ships. A mermaid mother holds her child near the companionway hatch, across from a carved portrait of the great polar explorer Roald Amundsen. Stowe carved Amundsen while sailing to Antarctica in 1986 to "bring his protective spirit onto the boat . . . I've carved a small portrait of myself into his head, and I've got my finger raised to say, watch out! We're in a life-and-death situation here!"

"It was my ability to connect with and become one with the sea that allowed me to sail on the sea longer than any man ever has."

Often Stowe has used his art to mentally prepare himself for the astounding physical feats he has accomplished in his life — feats like sailing to Antarctica and, of course, his thousand-day voyage. It's as if he carves himself into his art as a way of committing his physical body to follow the wild, colorful visions of his mind. Stowe challenges his life to imitate his art, rather than the other way around.

Other carvings hold spiritual truths for him. In the pilothouse, under a meditating Buddha, there is a carving of the Hindu eagle god Garuda, swooping down to rescue a sailing ship from a whirling maelstrom, as a steamship disappears into the vortex. "Garuda lifts the spiritual aspirant up to higher heights," Stowe explains, "while the world of boats and motors is left behind to sink." He credits Joseph Conrad, the turn-of-the-century mariner and author of the classic novella *Heart of Darkness*, for helping to inspire that one. But whereas Conrad wrote things like "the sea has never been friendly to man — at most it has been the accomplice of human restlessness," Stowe puts his own spiritual twist on it: "The sea loves me. And I love each and every wave," he says. "It was my ability to connect with and become one with the sea that allowed me to sail on the sea longer than any man ever has."

Stowe carves in other mediums besides wood, too. He pioneered a style he calls "GPS art." In this form, he uses the position of the schooner as a stylus, then alters his course to draw great shapes on the sea. On past voyages he has drawn enormous sea turtles and hearts thousands of miles in circumference. Halfway through his thousand-day

voyage, his course took on the shape of a whale by accident; friends following the voyage onshore notified him by satellite phone. "I looked at the chart and said, Jeez, if I change course now I can make the flipper," Stowe said. "So right away I changed course and started going in another direction." What's amazing about this is that at sea, there is no indication that anything is actually being drawn in the wake behind the boat; the art takes a physical form in the plotted points on his chart, yes, but it mostly exists in a theoretical, conceptual, abstract way in the mind — yet its creation is subject to real-world changes in wind, waves and weather. The whale Stowe plotted on his chart looked eerily similar in size and shape to another carving on the pilothouse wall of two whales battling giant squid. "This carving turned out to be prophetic," Stowe said, gesturing.

"It was the main turning point in the voyage," he remembered. "At that point (his partner) Soanya had to leave (to give birth to their son, Darshen); I was sad about that. And on top of that, I was sore, I was running out of fresh water, I was being harassed by all these people on the Internet who said I was a phony, that I wasn't going to make it, that I deserved to die. But when I drew the whale, everything changed. Nature was speaking to me; the whales were speaking to me. They reaffirmed to me that I'm connected to the magic, and I'm with them. And it changed my state of mind. After that, I knew I was going to make it."

For many years Stowe has used his art to transform his mental landscape and accomplish his physical feats of endurance. But at the same time, he says, his creation is "a spiritual practice that empowers that high-performance physical action and myself to higher sublime heights." As he sails and carves on the edge of living, the lines between the real and the mystical become blurred; the visions he creates in his art bleed over into his waking life. This makes his work powerful, almost talismanic. He has called himself a "shaman of the sea" in the past, and I cannot think of a more fitting moniker.

But his actions and his art, while epic, still exist on a human scale, and that makes them even more powerful. They widen our imagination by pushing far beyond what we thought possible, but at the same time still connect with the ancient, common humanity that's shared by everyone. While not everyone who views his work might share his story or face the challenges of being at sea, we all still sail the voyage of our own lives. The carvings of Reid Stowe remind us of the importance of our own state of mind in our voyaging, and how common (yet still magical) things like love and luck can help carry us along in uncommon circumstances.

John Wolfe studied creative nonfiction at UNCW. When he's not in the water, he wishes he were.

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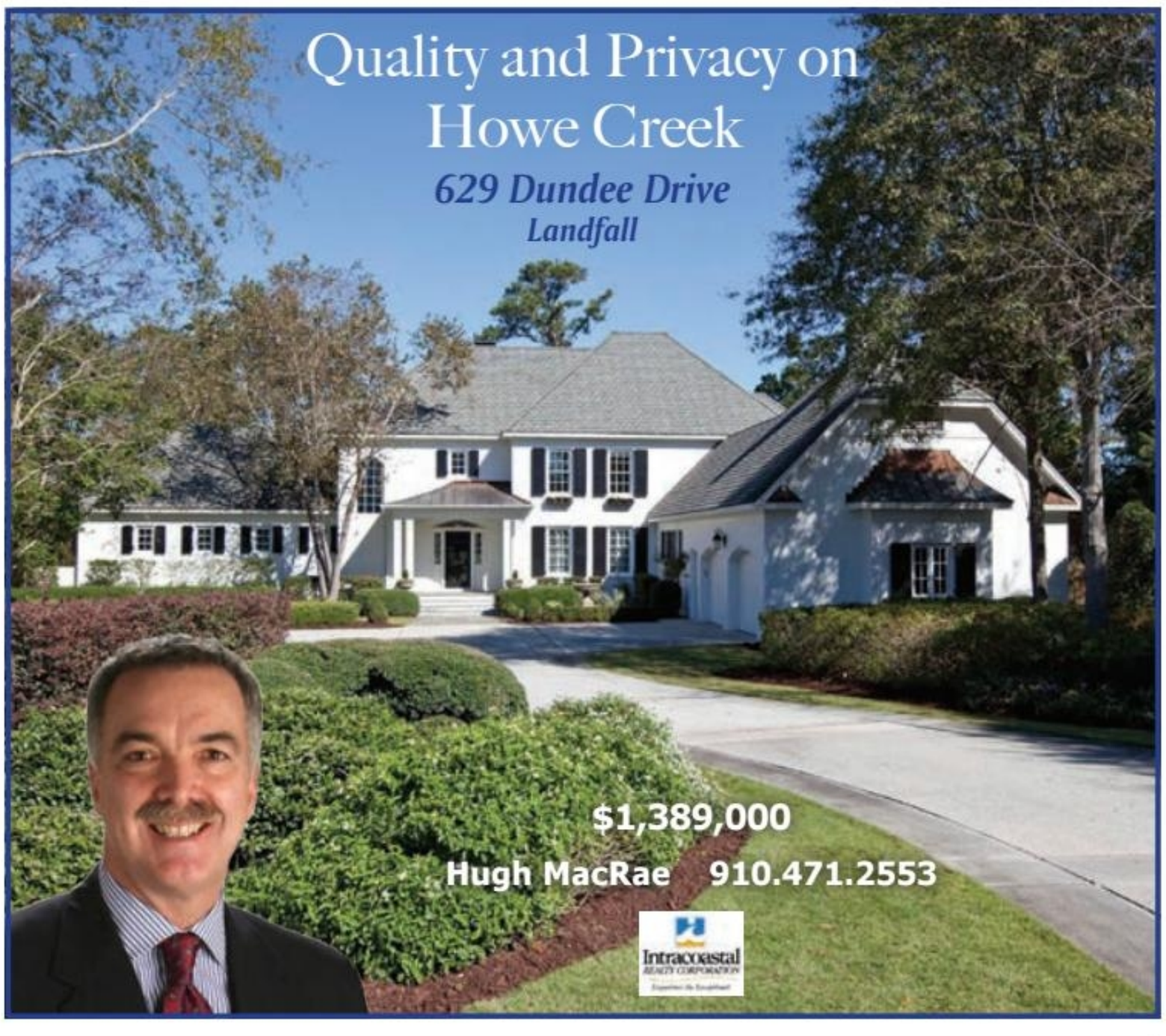

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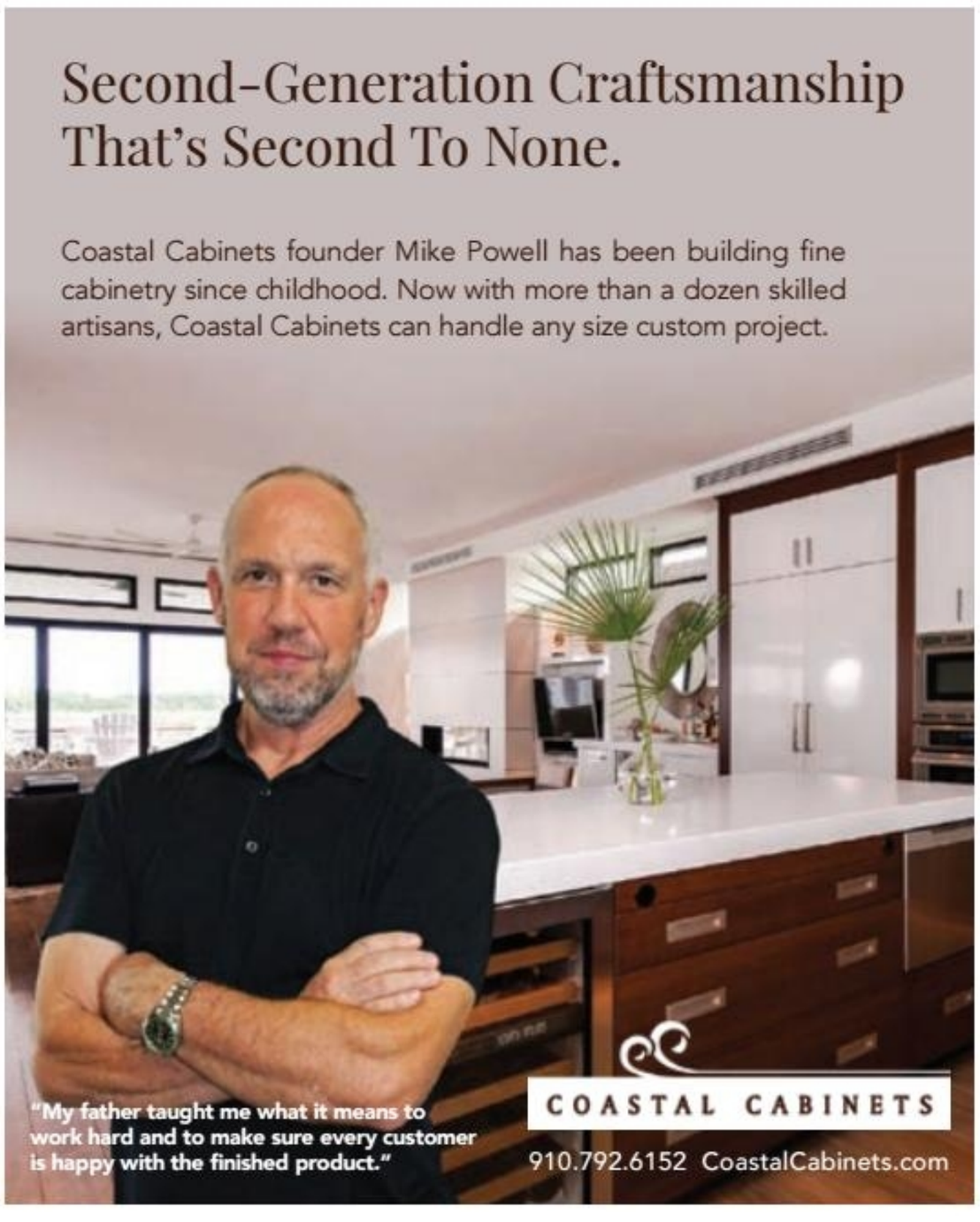

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Winter Stews

On a cold winter's night, wrap your hands around a bowl and you will begin to understand why these hearty one-pot meals have sustained people in the South for centuries

By Jane Lear

A stew, with its deep, soulful flavor and intoxicating aroma, is a stellar example of what can happen when household economy meets benign neglect. The main ingredient is often an inexpensive cut of meat, and it is perfectly comfortable on a back burner while you tend to other things. A stew offers comfort and sustenance, makes a great party dish since it's at its best when prepared ahead, and ranges from homey (chicken and dumplings) to haute (boeuf bourguignon).

The term *stew*, by the way, generally refers to a mixture simmered until it makes its own thick sauce. The technique is an unhurried, transformative one that results in a spoon-friendly meal that is far more than the sum of its parts.

Beyond that, though, things get murky. It's difficult to separate stews from bogs, burgoos, chowders, gumbos, hashes, muddles, mulls and purloos, and frankly, I don't want to even try. What distinguishes them all in my book is that they are thoughtful, unpretentious and highly adaptable to seasonal ingredients or the contents of your larder. And given our increased appetite for global flavors, the Persian chicken stew called *fesenjan* (with walnuts and pomegranate seeds), a Mexican *posole* (pork, hominy, and chiles), a Moroccan *tagine* (lamb, prunes and apricots), or a Brazilian *feijoada* (black beans, bacon and chorizo) are well within the reach of any home cook with access to a good supermarket.

One of the most famous Southern contributions to the genre is Brunswick stew. The standard line is that it originated in Brunswick County, Virginia, on a hunting trip in 1828, when Dr. Creed Haskins's black camp cook, Jimmy Matthews, made a squirrel stew bolstered with onions, stale bread and seasonings.

This provenance is hotly debated among aficionados in Brunswick County, Georgia, and Brunswick County, North Carolina. And let's face it, it seems reasonable to presume that Native Americans in the region were concocting stews of wild game long before anyone else arrived on the scene. "In that sense," wrote John Egerton in his masterful *Southern Food: At Home, on the Road, in History*, "there was Brunswick stew before there was a Brunswick."

These days, the squirrel in Brunswick stew has been displaced by chicken or other domesticated meats, and additions include a highly peppered melange of vegetables such as onions, potatoes, tomatoes, butter beans and corn. I tend to prefer it with rabbit or chicken, and even though the meat is traditionally shredded into long strands, keeping it in bite-size chunks makes a nice contrast with the tender vegetables.

There are many other renowned stews to be found in the South, including the burgoo of Kentucky (similar to Brunswick, it's unique in its use of mutton or lamb); the terrapin stew of Maryland and the Eastern Shore of Virginia; oyster stew, which you'll find all along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts; and Pine Bark Stew, which is said to have originated along the Pee Dee River near

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Florence, South Carolina, in the 1700s. The true origin of the name is lost in the mists of time — there are as many hypotheses as there are recipes — but the dark brown stew incorporates freshwater fish such as bass, trout or bream into a flavorful slurry of bacon, potatoes, onions, tomatoes (sometimes in the form of canned soup and/or catsup) and often curry powder.

And then there is the Frogmore stew of South Carolina and Georgia. Named after an old sea island settlement and sometimes called Beaufort stew or a seafood or Lowcountry boil, this crowd-pleasing jumble of shrimp, spicy smoked link sausage, corn on the cob, and often crab and potatoes is at home anywhere on the southeast Atlantic coast. Frogmore stew is eaten differently than other stews: After the ingredients are boiled, they're drained before being heaped on a large

It's difficult to separate stews from bogs, burgoos, chowders, gumbos, hashes, muddles, mulls and purloos, and frankly, I don't want to even try.

platter and typically served outside on newspaper-covered tables, with an abundant supply of beer and wine. In other words, what is not to love?

A favorite stew of mine is one that does not have a Southern provenance, but it sure is good, and can be easily cobbled together for a weeknight supper or casual evening with friends. The star of the show is escarole, a type of endive that at first glance looks much like a loose head of lettuce. Although the leaves turn a bit drab in color when cooked, don't let that deter you. They also become supple and succulent, and their pleasant bitterness plays beautifully with two humble, often unsung ingredients: white beans and Italian sausage. This stew is a happy reminder that the word *thrift* is often a synonym for *delicious*. And if you've been wanting to incorporate more beans and greens into your diet, it's a great place to start.

Escarole, White Bean and Sausage Stew

Serves 4 to 6 (the recipe can easily be doubled)

Like so much of my culinary repertoire, this stew hearkens back to my years at *Gourmet* maga-

zine, where it was a staff favorite. The recipe was originally from *American Brasserie*, a cookbook by Chicago chefs Rick Tramonto and Gale Gand, and the only embellishments you need are a loaf of crusty bread and, for after, a crunchy green salad. If I can't find escarole for some reason, I stir in leftover cooked kale, collards or other pot greens. And although diced plum tomatoes add freshness, color and a hit of acidity, if you can't find good ones, then leave them out. If you're fortunate enough to have leftovers, a spoonful or two makes a good topping for crostini.

1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling over finished stew
1 pound bulk Italian sausage (sweet and/or hot), broken into bite-size pieces
About 5 large garlic cloves, minced
1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes, or to taste
1 head escarole, washed, trimmed, and cut into 2-inch pieces
3 cups cooked or canned white beans such as great northern or navy (drained and rinsed if canned)
3 cups chicken broth
1/2 stick unsalted butter, cut into a few pieces
1/2 cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, plus more for sprinkling over finished stew
2 plum tomatoes, diced
2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
Coarse salt and freshly ground fresh pepper

Heat the oil in a deep large skillet or other heavy wide pot over moderately high heat until hot. Brown the sausage, stirring occasionally, for about 10 minutes. Add the garlic and red pepper flakes, then cook, stirring, just until garlic is softened, a minute or so. Add the escarole and cook, turning with tongs, until wilted. (You can add the escarole in batches if necessary, depending on the size and depth of your pot.)

Add the beans and cook, stirring, 1 minute. Add the broth and bring to a gentle boil. (You can make the stew ahead up to this point. Let it cool completely, uncovered, before refrigerating, covered. Then reheat before continuing.)

Stir in the butter, tomatoes, and about half the parsley, then cook, stirring, until the butter is melted and the stew is hot. Season with salt and pepper. Ladle the stew into warmed bowls and sprinkle with remaining parsley. Serve with olive oil and Parmesan.

The former senior articles editor at Gourmet *magazine, food writer Jane Lear has been based in New York for 30-odd years. There are some relatives in Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia who believe she is still going through a phase after college.*

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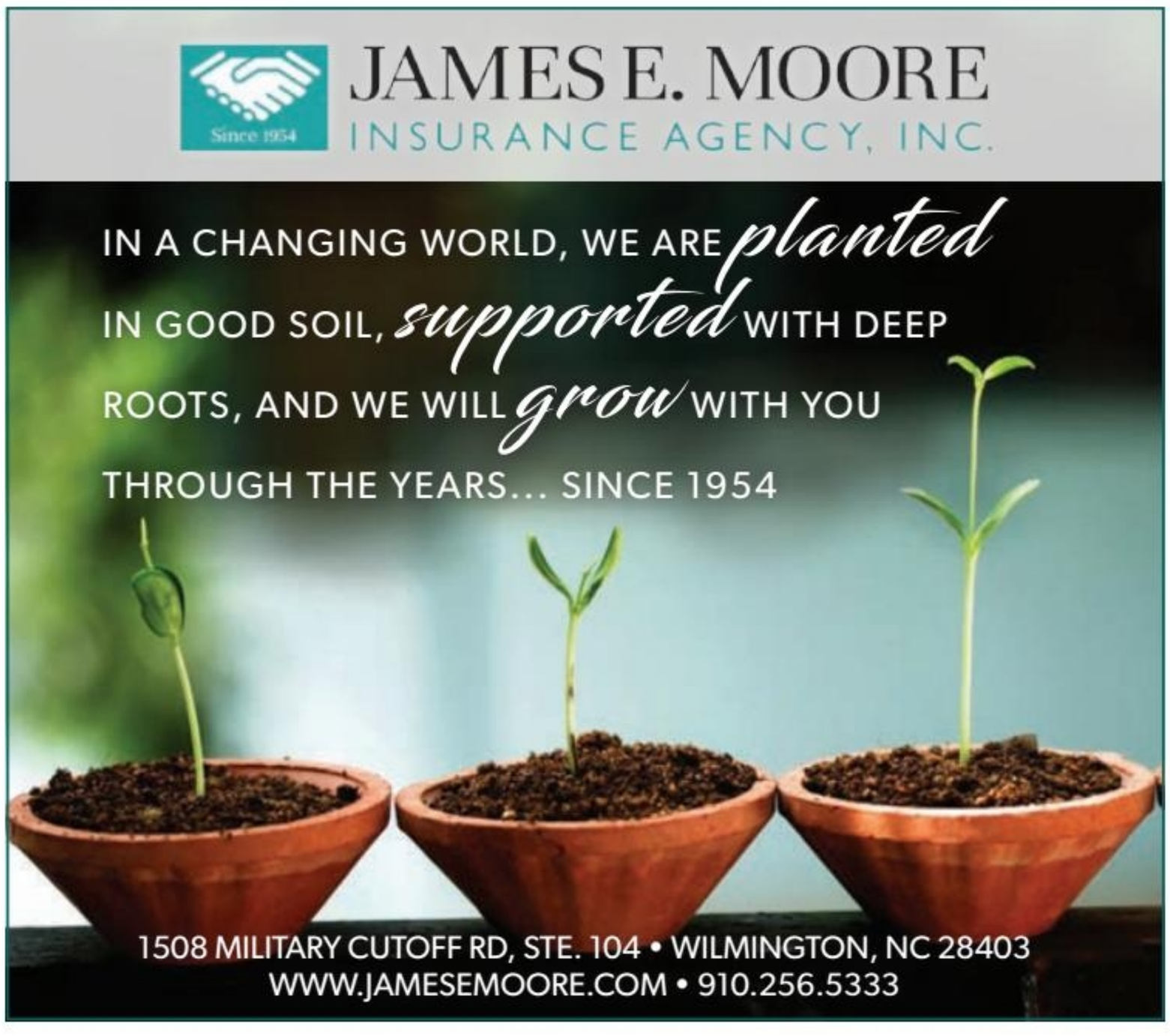
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Hot Toddies

Warming up your winter cocktail repertoire

PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY CROSS

By Tony Cross

Maybe it's just me, but I think whiskey carries over better with folks during the colder months. I drink it year-round and definitely had my share of Boulevardiers over the summer, but I tend to drink whisky and whiskey *straight* more so during this time of year. However, at the end of the night, I usually prefer to mix myself a hot toddy of some sort. Toddies are simple drinks to make, with hardly aany ingredients to grab from your kitchen. I desire them during certain late nights because they are soothing, and don't pack the punch of imbibing it straight. I usually like to mess around with different ratios, bitters, and liqueurs to put a spin on the classics, and the toddy is no different. A good hot cocktail can put aches and pains at bay, even if it's only for a few hours.

The first mention of a whiskey toddy is written in Jerry Thomas's 1862 book *The Bar-Tenders Guide*, , but it's referred to as an *Irish Whiskey Punch*: "This is the genuine Irish beverage. It is generally made with one-third pure whiskey, two-thirds boiling water, in which the sugar has been dissolved. If lemon punch, the rind is rubbed on the sugar, and a small proportion of juice is added before the whiskey is poured in." Let's break that down. One-third of Irish whiskey can be 2 ounces, and the hot water should be 4. The "lemon punch" is nothing more than an oleo-saccharum (oil-sugar). To do this, take the peel from one lemon (avoiding the pith, as it will add bitterness) and place it into a small cup-sized container. Add half a cup of baker's sugar on top of the peels, and seal. Let sit for at least four hours. This will extract the oils from the lemon peels into the sugar. In a small pot, add 4 ounces of water and put it on medium-high heat. Add the lemon-sugar, and stir until the sugar has dissolved. The amount of oleo-saccharum to add to your toddy is up to you; I recommend starting out with 1/2 ounce.

Renowned bartender Jim Meehan has his version of a hot whiskey in his newly published book, *Meehan's Bartender Manual*. In it, he mixes Thomas's Irish Whiskey Punch and Whiskey Skin. Thomas's Whiskey Skin is whiskey, boiling water and a lemon peel. Meehan recalls his first hot whiskey when he visited Ireland for the first time in 1997: "I was no stranger to hot toddies, but I'd never tasted one with a clove-studded lemon wedge, which serves the same steam- and heat-mitigating function as the head on an Irish Coffee. Since alcohol boils at a lower temperature than water, if you combine boiling hot water with alcohol, heady fumes will evaporate from the glass, repelling all but the most intrepid imbibers." That first whiff of a hot toddy might send you into a coughing frenzy. Meehan's recipe is also simple:

Hot Whiskey

(Meehan's Bartender Manual, 2017)

4 ounces hot water

1 1/2 ounces Powers Irish Whiskey (Jameson will work, too)

1 ounce honey syrup

Garnish with 1 lemon wedge studded with 3 cloves

Honey Syrup

(Makes 16 ounces)

8 ounces filtered water

12 ounces honey

Simmer the water and honey in a pot over medium heat (approximately 180° F) until the honey dissolves. Cool and bottle.

I'm sure you can see how making a traditional Whiskey Skin wouldn't be the least bit interesting if you ordered one at the bar, or if you made one at home. I'm not saying it wouldn't do the trick, I'm just saying. That's why myriad barmen implement their own spin on today's toddy. I'll admit, I usually keep mine simple: bourbon or cognac with a rich demerara syrup, aromatic bitters and a squeeze of lemon. One week when under the weather, I did whip together something healthy *and* tasty. Maybe it wasn't healthy, but I felt better afterwards.

Just as with any other classic drink, learn the basics and why it works. I chose High West's American Prairie Bourbon. Why? Because it was the bourbon whiskey closest to my hand on the shelf. I used echinacea tea — this particular tea helped soothe my throat when I was sick the year prior — added fresh lemon for the citrus, and a local honey and ginger syrup for the sugar. For spice, I threw in a few dashes of Teapot Bitters from Adam Elmegirab (available online; flavors of vanilla, tea and baking spices). Easy to make, and really good going down. If you start with the basics, and learn why the specs work, it will become easier to play with other ingredients and make your own specialty toddy.

Hard Day's Night

1 1/2 ounces bourbon (I used High West American Prairie)

4 ounces (boiling hot) Traditional Medicinal Throat Coat Echinacea Tea

1/2 ounce honey-ginger syrup

1/4 ounces fresh lemon

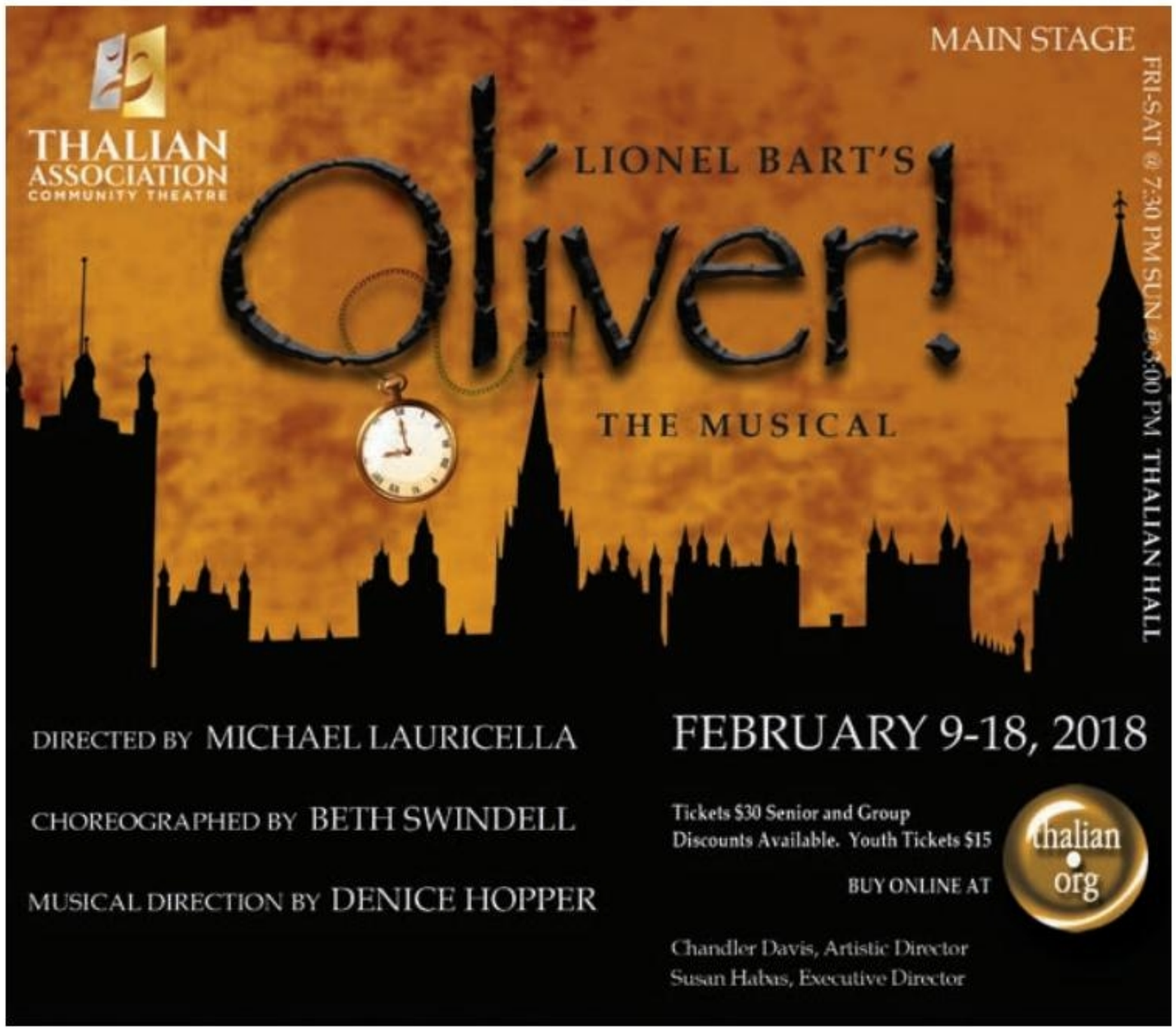
3 dashes Dr. Adam Elmegirab Teapot Bitters

Preheat a coffee mug with hot water. Add all ingredients into heated mug and stir lightly for a few revolutions. Add a twist of lemon.

Honey-ginger syrup

In a small pot, combine 1/2 cup honey (depending where you buy your honey, it *will* taste different; store bought – not local – will taste very sweet) 1/2 cup of water and 1 ounce fresh ginger juice (if you don't have a juicer, grate organic ginger into a cheesecloth or nut milk bag and squeeze the juice into a container). Place over medium-high heat, and stir for a few minutes until all three ingredients have married.

Tony Cross is a bartender who runs cocktail catering company Reverie Cocktails *in Southern Pines.*



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Eastern Towhee

Well hidden but always heard

By Susan Campbell

"Drink your tea, drink your tea," the loud, emphatic call comes from dense shrubbery right outside our door. It is the voice of a common, but frequently overlooked, Eastern towhee. It is hard to imagine that such a persistent songster could keep so well hidden. But towhees' larger size makes them a great target for predators, so keeping hidden is the survival strategy they employ. They belong to the sparrow family, given that they are short-billed birds found in brushy or grassy habitat.

The bird's name originates from its typical "tow-hee" call. The towhee was first described by some of the earliest Europeans to arrive in the New World. The artist-cartographer John White noticed them during his visit to the English colony on Roanoke Island (1685-86). It was this trip that documented the colony's disappearance (the Lost Colony). White's unpublished drawings of both males and females predated the famous work by Catesby of the birds of Colonial America from the late 1700s by more than 100 years.

Many backyard birdwatchers here along the coast are rather confused when they finally catch their first glimpse of a towhee. Is it some kind of oriole? Perhaps it is a young rose-breasted grosbeak? Males are quite colorful with rufous or chestnut flanks set against a white belly with a black hood, black back and wings, as well as a long black and white tail. The bill, too, is jet black. Females sport brown feathers instead but still have rufous sides. Their legs are long and powerful: good for kicking around debris in search of insects and seeds. Their eyes are typically red, but in our area they may be pale. Birds with yellowy to white irises actually belong to a separate subspecies found in parts of the Southeast. Furthermore, intermediate individuals with orange eyes do occur in our area.

Eastern towhees are found, as their name implies, throughout the eastern United States. Here in the Southeast, they are year-round residents, although we do have some wintering individuals that breed farther north. Their diet is variable, consisting of a variety of invertebrates (insects, spiders, millipedes) during the breeding season. However, in the colder months, towhees can also be found scratching for seeds dropped by other birds from feeders. Their heavy bill allows them to take advantage of a variety of seeds. The powerful jaw muscles associated with such a strong bill make it a formidable weapon. If attacked, a towhee can inflict quite a bite. Males will viciously attack each other during territorial disputes and may inflict mortal wounds grabbing the body or head of an opponent. Conflict is not infrequent where food is abundant, so the potential for fights is frequent throughout the year in our area.

It is not uncommon for Eastern towhees to raise three broods in a summer. Each brood involves three to five young. Nests are simple affairs, in short shrubbery or even directly on the ground. As a result, nestlings often do not remain in the nest long after their eyes open and downy feathers cover their bodies. They will move around noisily begging from the adults. Young towhees will instinctively run for cover if their parents sound the alarm.

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– *Ry Southard*

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A Father's Journey

Stillman Wightman traveled 1,200 miles from New York to Fort Fisher to bring his son home

By Kevin Maurer

The wind cut into Stillman Wightman as he worked his way along the berm searching for overturned dirt near Fort Fisher's northern stockade.

It was 13 days after the Union victory that would doom the Confederate rebellion, and Wightman, a 62-year-old New York lawyer, was on a mission to find his son, Edward. Days before he'd learned of Edward's death and now, after traveling 600 miles by train and boat, he was at Fort Fisher to bring home his son's remains for a proper burial.

Wightman pulled his coat closer as the stiff ocean wind made the January day along the Atlantic even colder. He was about 250 feet from the wall when he spotted overturned dirt.

There were 30 graves, most with no marker. He had heard fallen soldiers were often buried en masse in trenches. Struggling through the salt marshes and loose sand, the possibility of failing on his quest weighed on him when he spotted a small, narrow pine board at the head of another grave. The wind kicked up sand and dust, forcing Wightman to shield his spectacles as he leaned in to read the inscription painted on the board.

"Sergt Major 3d N. Y. V.— E. K. Wightman."

On Jan. 15, 1865, Union troops led by Maj. Gen. Alfred Terry launched a second attack against Fort Fisher. Nicknamed the "Gibraltar of the South," the Confederate stronghold protected the Cape Fear River and the South's lifeline

through the Union blockade.

More than 9,000 Union troops and 60 ships attacked the fort manned by almost 2,000 Confederates. The Union victory closed the port of Wilmington, choking off the last supply line to Confederate troops. The battle cost the Union Army over 1,000 casualties. Among the dead was Edward K. Wightman, serving with the 3rd New York Volunteer Infantry.

After traveling from New York City to Fort Fisher, Wightman — who lived to be 96 — sat down and documented his three-week journey, including stops in Hampton Roads, Va., New Bern and Morehead City in a vivid, yet heart-wrenching, travelogue. At a time when our nation is still struggling with the aftermath of the Civil War, Wightman's story erases the myth that war is glorious and instead shows us the human cost of war. His story is a stark reminder that it is the politicians who talk of causes, but it is the soldiers who give up their lives to give those words meaning. And it is the soldiers' families who are left to pick up the pieces.

Death Notice

Wightman learned of his son's death in the Jan. 19, 1865 edition of the *New York Herald*. Printed in black and white, the paper announced "Sergeant Major Whiteman (sic) 3d N.Y.V. was killed" at the second battle of Fort Fisher.

Edward, 27 years old at his death, was a writer before enlisting in the Army. He had already served 2 1/2 years of his three-year enlistment and took part in 15 battles, from Antietam to the first attempt to take Fort Fisher.

His last letter home — written onboard the steamship *Atlantic* — talked about the family's Christmas letter and how much he missed home. Sent Jan. 12, Edward complained the Christmas letter gave him "such a shock of homesickness and hunger that I came near being annihilated," adding that if he saw another Christmas he hoped it was a jolly one.

He closed the letter on a high note:

"Let us hope that the year 1865 will restore peace in the country and to all Americans the rights and privileges of respectable citizens."

Edward would die three days later when a minié ball tore through his arm and chest, knocking him to his knees at the top of a parapet on Fort Fisher's northwest wall.

After hearing the news of his son's death, Wightman's house was "immediately enveloped in sad mourning," so he went to his law office to think and pray. He returned home with a plan. It was his duty to go to Fort Fisher and get Edward's body. His family didn't discourage him, despite the difficulty of the journey.

Wightman left New York on Jan. 19 and after a sleepless train ride arrived in Washington, D.C. It was dawn as he set off to get a pass to and from Fort Fisher. Wightman knew Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, who wrote him a letter of introduction to the secretary of war, who issued him a pass. With his pass in hand, Wightman boarded a steamer headed for Fort Monroe, a Union stronghold in Confederate Virginia. The fort stands at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay near Norfolk.

From the deck of the steamer, crowded with soldiers and civilians, Wightman watched chunks of ice float past. He roamed the boat unable to sleep. When fatigue finally took hold, he pushed two narrow chairs together and found a cushion for his head. The steamer arrived at Fort Monroe at 10 o'clock on Saturday. Wightman went ashore looking for passage to Fort Fisher, but learned the next boat wasn't heading south for a few days.

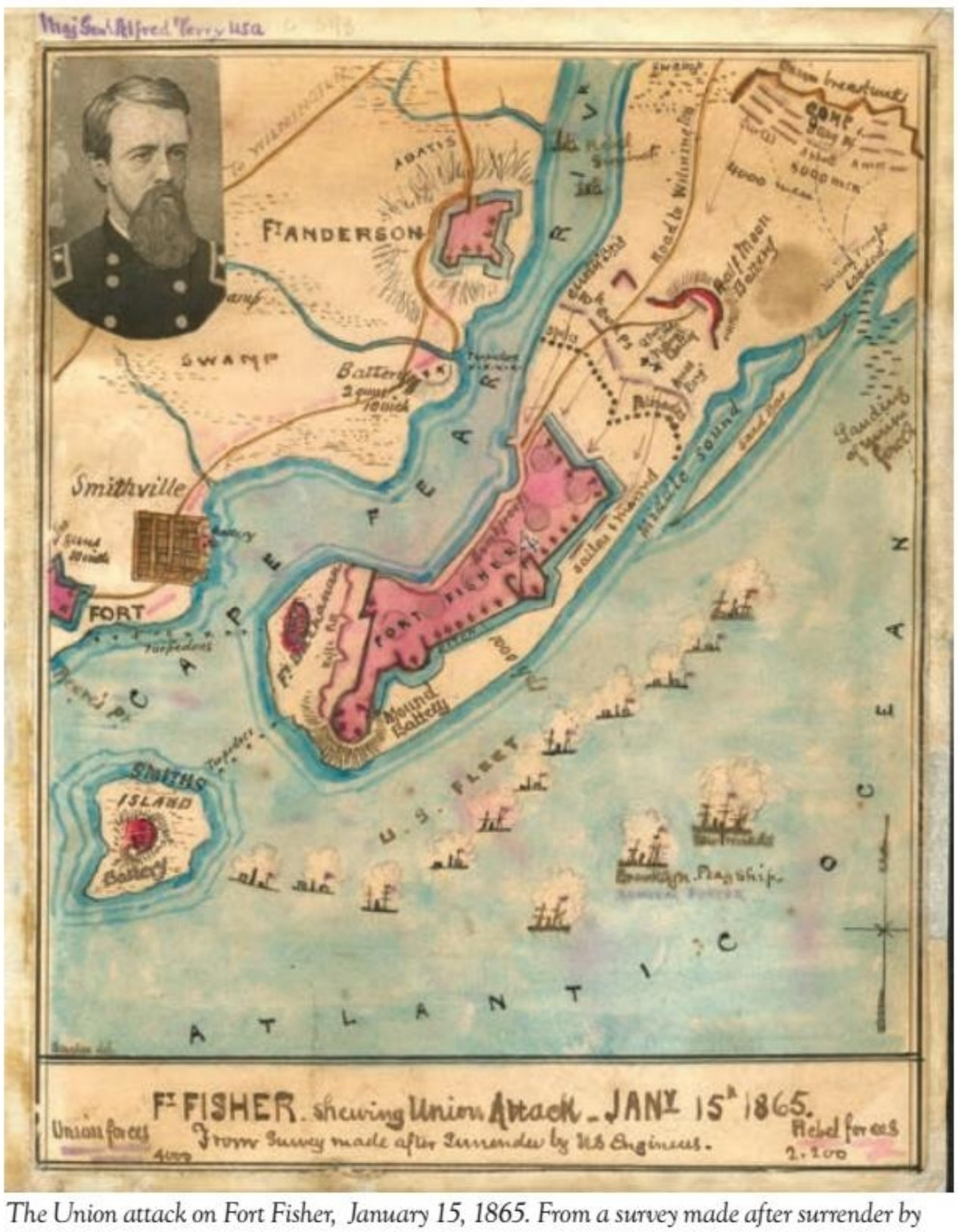
When Wightman learned that Capt. Warren, who had served with Edward, was in a nearby hospital, he got a pass to visit him. Wightman walked three miles Sunday morning to meet Warren and Lt. Behan, who was also wounded in the battle and being treated in the same room.

Both soldiers expressed their condolences. Warren described Edward as "affable" and "kind," and "was held in great esteem by the men of the regiment." In battle, Edward was cool under fire and brave executing his duties.

"Perhaps, the best description I can give of him, is, that I considered him a model soldier," Warren said.

They also told Wightman about the attack. It started around 2 p.m. with a naval bombardment that silenced the fort's guns. Union soldiers cut a path through the outer defenses and by 5 p.m. were storming the fort's walls.

Edward was out front and leading his regiment up the first mound at the northeast extremity of the fort. Confederate defenders were at the top firing down on the Union soldiers.



The Union attack on Fort Fisher, January 15, 1865. From a survey made after surrender by U.S. Engineers.

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"Edward was mounting the slope in front, and just upon the point of reaching the same parapet, near me, not far from the northwest end of the fort, when he was shot, as I think, in the left breast by a minié ball from a rifle, and fell while shouting to the regiment to press bravely on to the charge," Behan told Wightman.

Another soldier rushed to his aid, pressing a cup of water to his lips. But Behan said Edward's eyes were closed and never opened again. Edward was found under three dead bodies. His pockets were turned out and his watch was stolen.

Wightman returned to Fort Monroe that night. As he walked back, a sadness hung over him. Edward's unit mates confirmed the grim reality that his son was "no more a living man in this world."

On Tuesday, Jan. 24, 1865, a transport ship — the *Ellen S. Terry* — from New York arrived in route to New Bern. Wightman knew the ship's captain and booked passage. On board, the stench was terrible. The transport was hauling horses

and 60 head of cattle. Two of the cattle died between New York and Fort Monroe and were thrown overboard. But the smell lingered below decks and wafted out of the hatches, making the journey unpleasant and keeping Wightman on deck. He watched the lighthouse on Cape Hatteras slip by as the ship rolled in the waves.

The ship arrived too late for Wightman to take the train to Morehead City, so he spent the day in New Bern before traveling to the port on Friday morning. At the port, he found E. R. Middlebrook, who went to Wightman's church, the First Baptist Church in New York City. Middlebrook was the chief clerk at the quartermaster's office and provided Wightman with a pine coffin and passage on the transport *Montauk*. The ship was taking in supplies for the army at Fort Fisher.

Fort Fisher

The sun was shining bright and clear the Sunday morning Wightman landed two miles north of Fort Fisher. He waded through loose, deep sand and muddy salt marsh as he walked toward the fort's battered earthworks.

Halfway to the fort, Wightman started to shake. He was an old man, and 10 days and nights traveling, sometimes exposed to the wind and cold of the Atlantic, started to take a toll. Tears rolled down his cheeks. He stopped walking and searched for a place to sit, but he was in a salt marsh. There was no cover from the cutting wind. It was then that Wightman started to pray, and as God came into his thoughts, he wrote:

"As thy days, so shall thy strength be.

"Fear not, for I am with thee.

"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Each sentence brought resolve, then strength and finally joy.

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," Wightman said aloud and then started to sing a hymn as he pushed toward Fort Fisher.

As he approached the earthworks, the scars of war were everywhere. A damaged cannon. The wheels from a wagon. Artillery shells — broken and unbroken — littered the area. A ditch filled by the tide ran along the fort's wall bordering the sea.

Wightman followed in his son's footsteps. He passed through a gateway cut in the stockade at the north extremity of the fort, crossed a small bridge and walked to the northwest end of the fort where Warren and Behan told him Edward had fallen. A Union soldier was walking nearby. Wightman called to him.

"Any graves in this area of soldiers killed in the battle of the 15th January?" Wightman said.

The Union soldier said yes and pointed him toward an elevated knoll of sand, where he found the small pine board marking his son's resting place.

Three times Wightman tried to leave his son to report to Gen. Terry's headquarters. Three times he returned — even after walking some distance away — transfixed by the inscription. When Wightman finally arrived at Terry's headquarters, he needed the officer's sympathy and support to complete his mission.

He shook Terry's hand when they finally met and asked if Terry used to practice law in New Haven, Connecticut.

"I was," Terry said.

"Well, I am a practicing lawyer in New York City, but I once resided, near five years, in New Haven, while I was at Yale College, and studying law, and I subsequently practiced law in Connecticut, until I removed to New York City

Interior view, showing traverse with dismounted gun. Fort Fisher, January 1865.

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Interior of the "Pulpit" January 1865.

Interior view of transverse and magazine on the land front of Fort Fisher, January 1865.

Interior view of Fort Fisher, January 1865.

in 1843," Wightman said.

Terry seemed to recognize Wightman.

"Is this Stillman K. Wightman?" Terry said.

"It is."

"Give us your hand," Terry said, shaking the man's hand again. "How are you? I have, a long time, known you well by reputation. Anything that I can do for you, shall be done with the greatest pleasure."

Wightman told Terry why he was at Fort Fisher, and Terry issued orders to Gen. Adelbert Ames, who led one of Terry's divisions, to help with the removal of Edward's body. Wightman took the orders to Ames, headquarters, but an Army doctor, Dr. Washburn, asked if he had a lead coffin. Wightman only had the pine one from Morehead City. Washburn said too much time had passed, and Edward's remains needed a lead coffin. Wightman was stunned. His whole journey was in jeopardy. His mind searched for an argument that would win the day. Alas, he threatened to never leave.

"It has been a never-failing rule with me hitherto, never to abandon a thing I have undertaken, until it is accomplished, provided it be an object worth pursuing," Wightman said. "This is an object eminently worthy of my utmost efforts, and I must say, without intending to give offence, that if it be not counter to God's will, I will never leave Federal Point without taking the body of Edward with me."

Ames paused and let the silence fill the room.

"Well," he said. "I will cheerfully aid you all I can, but we are as yet in a very unsettled condition."

The next day, an officer told Wightman three bodies that had been buried three months were taken to New Bern wrapped in tent cloths covered in hot pitch, which was used to seal wooden sailing vessels and containers. Washburn said if the coffin was filled with salt and rosin and sealed with pitch, the remains could be transported north in the cold weather.

Wightman spent the next three days scouring the camp and fort for supplies. He inquired of every person and got only one answer: no.

On the third day of his search, Wightman found himself near the rear of the fort where he spotted a "rising knoll of sand" in the tidewater of the Cape Fear River. Using a fragment of a pick-ax, he cleared away the sand and found a barrel filled with rosin. He slumped in the sand and started to cry. The next day, the Cape Fear River ebbed, exposing a barrel of pitch buried in the sand near the rosin. Terry ordered the hospital to provide the tent cloth, which Wightman picked up at Ames's headquarters where the coffin, rosin and pitch waited. With a "detail of men," Wightman headed for the grave.

After heating the pitch, they sealed the coffin and tent cloth before they started digging. By now, more than 20 soldiers gathered to watch them exhume Edward's body. Wightman stood at the foot of the grave. After digging four feet down, Wightman saw his son, Edward, lying on his back with his face toward the east.

"The collar, or rather cape, of his coat had been drawn up, and each end of it folded over his face," Wightman wrote. "When they came to move aside the collar, or cape, revealing his countenance, I was sadly struck with the sight. His face was white and very much swollen; his eyes had evidently been in some way injured, his chin dropped down very low, and his upper teeth were very prominent. However, his forehead and eyebrows and hair and ears were very natural, his hands were unmistakable, and his limbs — all were evidently his remains. In addition to this, he had on his left shoulder the badge of (Sergeant) Major."

The minié ball that ended Edward's life had passed through his right arm and pierced his right breast below the collarbone.

Wightman asked the soldiers to stop working while he studied the remains to make sure it was Edward. An Irish soldier joked that no delay was needed.

"And ye can have no doubt about that," the Irish soldier said. "For sure now he greatly resembles ye."

Wightman would have laughed at any other time, he wrote. Standing at the foot of his son's grave, he just stood in silence overwhelmed by what he saw in front of him.

"His whole life rushed upon my memory," Wightman wrote. "Gazing upon his lifeless remains before me, the wreck of all his and our fond anticipations, and feeling that I his father was standing there alone, a stranger in a strange land, far away from my family, with no one present heartily to sympathize with me in the loss, my emotions overcame me, and for a brief time my cheeks were wet with tears. No one can conceive of the agony of my trials on that occasion."

Wightman finally stepped aside and the soldiers removed Edward's body from the ground, wrapped it in tent cloth and laid him in the coffin. The soldiers sealed the top with pitch and started to nail it down. Wightman mounted his horse and rode back to Ames headquarters. He couldn't bear to hear the driving of the nails.

That night, he returned to the *Montauk* anchored nearby, ate dinner and collapsed in his bed, where he slept soundly.

"Perhaps it had been to me, the most painful day that I had ever experienced," he wrote.

Friday morning Wightman made plans to return home. The transport North Point was headed to Fort Monroe that afternoon or early morning, so Wightman had the coffin loaded and Saturday afternoon — Feb. 4 — the ship headed north. After a brief stop at Fort Monroe, Wightman found a steamer headed to Baltimore, where he got a train to New York.

Edward's funeral was held Feb. 11, 1865, in Middletown, Connecticut, at the family burying ground.

"I came away feeling that all my care and toil was nothing, compared with the satisfaction of knowing that his remains had been taken up from a grave in an enemy's land," Wightman wrote, "and had been safely transported to the land of his birth, and peacefully buried in our family cemetery."

After the service, Wightman lingered at the grave as if he didn't want to take the final few steps of his 1,200-mile journey.

Kevin Maurer is an award-winning journalist who lives in Wilmington. His latest book is American Radical: Inside the World of an Undercover Muslim FBI Agent.

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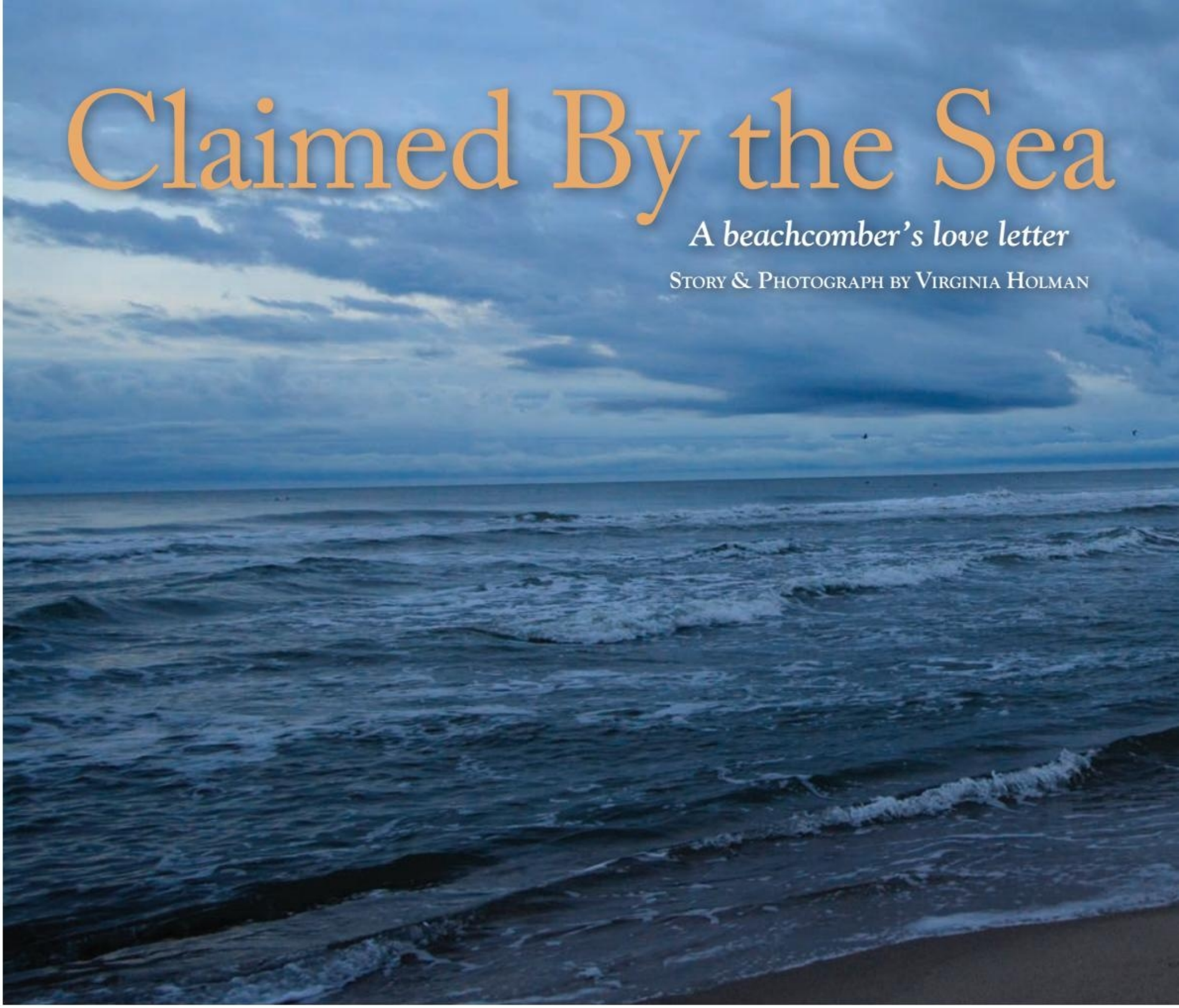
Claimed By the Sea

A beachcomber's love letter

Story & Photograph by Virginia Holman



Fourteen years ago, my son and I found ourselves on the shores of Carolina Beach. We'd driven down from our home in Durham one August day to tour the battleship in Wilmington. Afterward, on a whim, we drove to the shore to kill the afternoon. The water was glassy and opaque, and as the tide ebbed, we walked the wrack line, gathering bits of shell and polished pebbles. Sometimes we'd find a coin-size piece of smooth, translucent sea glass. The brittle, coiled interior of a whelk looked like a spiral staircase sans house. Was a wedge of sea-foam green glass the remnant of a beer bottle or an old fishing float? Who could tell? The sea transformed everything it touched, sometimes softening it until it became a shadowy approximation of its former self, sometimes shattering it until it was just an eggshell-thin bit of glint that refracted the unchanging sun.

Beautiful abstractions, shards from another day in what we imagined was another world, lay scattered around us. What were we to make of them? We arranged our findings on the sand, repurposing them for a sandcastle's windows and the scales of a mermaid's tail.

Another parent struck up a conversation and pointed out to the water where a series of large seaweed-covered bumps emerged from the water. Old pier footings, I guessed. My son said the humps looked like the Loch Ness monster. "That's a blockade runner!" the man said, and there on the beach, we had our first Cape Fear Civil War history lesson. Guess what we found while beachcombing? our son asked my husband when we returned home. Not much, he shrugged, then grinned with glee — just an entire blockade runner.

A year later, my husband changed careers, and we too were claimed by the sea, or at least the seashore. Serendipitously, we moved not far from the beached blockade runner and our family spent many days at the shoreline, gathering bits and pieces that intrigued us. Out son collected so many small black sharks' teeth that he thought of starting his own sharks' tooth jewelry business on the boardwalk.

One summer, while getting my truck inspected, I noticed a row of large fossils on the shop owner's desk. Ancient fossilized whale bones, he said. He picked up one and handed it to me. The "earbone" of an ancient whale, he said.

Then he handed me a vertebra fossil the size of a quart paint can. He also had a megalodon tooth nearly as big as my hand. I'd heard of people diving the murky offshore wrecks of the Cape Fear to gather the teeth of these ancient sharks. Did he dive? I asked. No, he just walked the beaches and spoil islands. After storms was best, he said. All sorts of stuff churns up after a storm. For the bones and teeth, he recommended walking the waterline on the rising tide and wriggling a foot through the loose sand.

Over the years, I've discovered that winter is the best time for beachcombing. A Nor'easter will come through and the waves grow thick and heavy for days. Then, a day or two in the calm that follows, I collect artifacts. The lost, buried and forgotten reveal themselves. Monklike figures with metal detectors bow their heads and solemnly walk a patch of sand, hoping for a glimpse of things unseen. Casual collectors often come in pairs; beachcombing for them appears to be a long, slow walk spent chatting and looking for the occasional intact sand dollar or a treasured "sea bean." Some beans are glossy heart-shaped tropical seeds from the Amazon and elsewhere; others look like small "hamburgers" when viewed from the side. They float and bob atop the water like corks. Little children run along and gather mollusk shells with perfect snail-drilled radula holes and offer them to grandparents, who thread these offerings on a bit of twine knotted at the bottom.

Occasionally larger items wash ashore. Reports this year included unexploded ordnance from World War II on the Outer Banks and a centuries-old dugout canoe that emerged in Florida after Hurricane Irma. Most beachcombers are happy to collect a piece of coral or a sea urchin.

The winds and seas and shifting sands of the Cape Fear region never fail to make me feel more alive through the long gray days of winter. I love to stroll Masonboro Island, and watch — as if it is a long, slow-motion movie — a lone, long-beached sailboat vanish and emerge from the sand. What an aching beauty there is in this dance of sand and sea and wind and time. No matter what washes ashore, what better place to find yourself than down by the sea?

Author Virginia Holman lives and writes in Carolina Beach.

Sportsman's Paradise

Designer Liz Carroll creates an elegant retreat for a busy Wilmington doctor and outdoorsman

By William Irvine · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

Dr. Michael Ott had a dilemma. A Wilmington E.R. doctor by day (and often by night), he wanted a place in his house — which he shares with his wife and two young daughters — where he could retreat during the off-hours that he needed to rest. And, oh yeah — it also had to have room for a large black bear, some deer heads, and many other woodland and sea creatures, which were certainly not part of his wife's decorating wish-list. "We looked at a bunch of different houses, but we wanted a place where I could go and bring my dead animals, which are not welcome in other parts of the house," he says with a grin. What to do?

Enter Liz Carroll, a Wilmington decorator with a clear vision of how to create a stylish solution. "It's really a man cave with a place for serious napping. He has a lot of scheduled late shifts and night shifts and needed a place with peace and quiet," she says. But it also needed to have some civilized style.

The Ott house is situated deep in the woods off Greenville Loop Road; farther down the unpaved lane you can catch a glimpse of the marsh that leads out to Hewletts Creek and the Intracoastal Waterway. The area is known to have been a Civil War encampment — neighbors with metal detectors have found many Confederate uniform buttons and belt buckles.

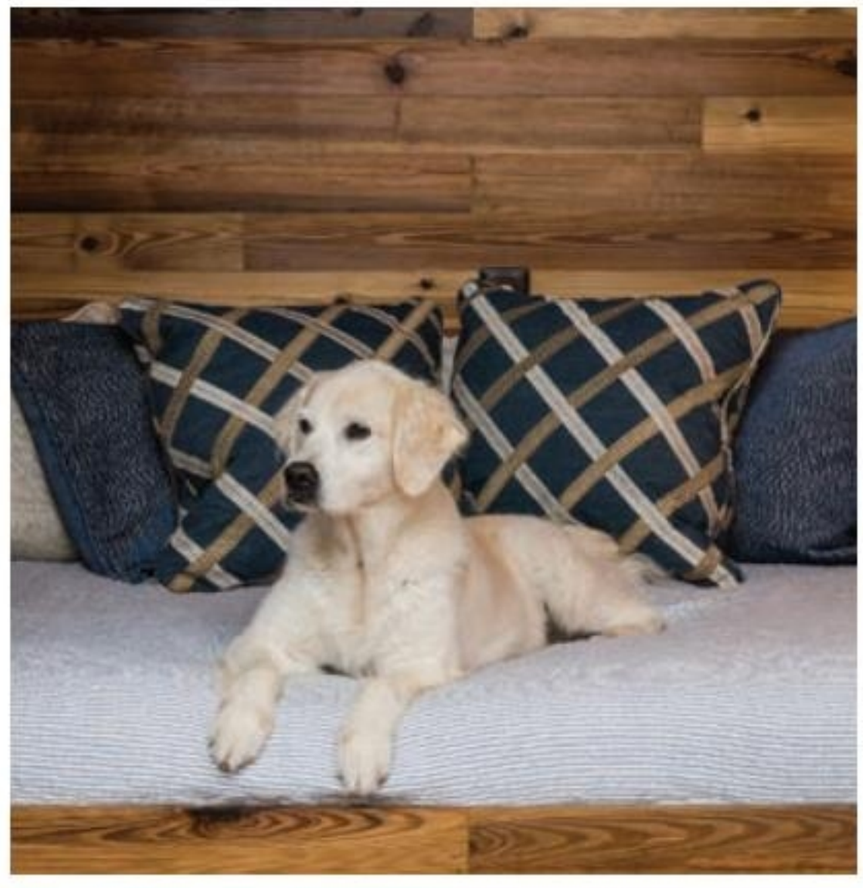
Builder David James completed the house in 2010, and not long after that the Otts and Carroll found each other. "We have had a lot of fun going through the house, decorating room by room," says Carroll, who has been working with the couple since 2012. "This room was specifically built for Mike because of his crazy hours; it has a separate staircase so he does not have to disturb the family if he comes home at 5 in the morning."

And it would be hard to imagine a more pleasant place to crash. An elegant seating area with upholstered wing chairs in soothing grays and whites surrounds a dark wood coffee table and overlooks a big-screen TV. The sleeping alcove dominates the end of the room; an arched rod with curtains follows the line of the built-in shelves, which hold smaller trophies; the curtains are closed when it's naptime. The interior wood lining the sleeping area has a distinctive

patina. "It's old heart pinewood from the bottom of the Cape Fear River," says Carroll. "Really great-looking." An oval window above has retractable wooden shutters that can be closed to block outside light for sleeping. A custom-made antler chandelier hangs overhead. The opposite side of the room features a wet bar and a handsome mahogany bar cabinet with drop-front liquor storage and a wine rack below.

And then there are the trophies. Michael Ott has been an outdoorsman since he started using a bow and arrow at age 7 in the land behind his house in Morristown, a small town on the St. Lawrence River in upstate New York. And the man cave reveals a history of his sporting life: "And there's nothing is this room that I didn't eat — except for the coyote," he confesses. His preferred method of hunting is still the bow and arrow.

The dominant trophy presence in the room is a large black bear: "I named him Fred Bear in honor of the legendary bow hunter. I came face-to-face with him at close range on a trail in Pender County near Holly Shelter," he says. Five deer trophies line the upper walls and are also mounted on slabs of beautiful dense heart pine from the Cape Fear. There is also a bobcat caught in Pender County and a wood duck from Lenoir County. Over the sleeping alcove is a big wahoo, caught in Wilmington; other locally caught fish include a mahi and a hog snapper: "The best-tasting fish in the ocean," Ott says. You can tell from his unbridled enthusiasm that this is a place he likes to be. And his daughters do, too. "His two little girls love to come up and spend some Daddy time with him here," says Carroll. "We have made it a special place."



Salt
MAGAZINE

would like to wish our readers and advertisers a

Happy New Year!

ALMANAC

January

By Ash Alder

It is deep January. The sky is hard. The stalks are firmly rooted in ice.

— Wallace Stevens, "No Possum, No Sop, No Taters"

Begin Again

Perhaps it's true that the best narratives are cyclical, taking the reader on a figurative journey that ultimately leads them back where they started, yet, through some alchemical reaction, altogether transformed. Like the fool's journey, or the legendary ouroboros eating its own tail.

Which brings us back to January.

Outside, a pair of cardinals flits between the naked branches of a dogwood and the ornate rim of the pedestal birdbath. You think of the piebald gypsy cat who used to visit, how he would balance on the ledge to take a drink. Months have passed since you've seen him, but that drifter has charm. You're sure he's napping in some cozy sunroom, patiently waiting for the catkins and crocus, for the cheerily, cheer-up, cheer-up, cheerily return of the robin. The warmth of your own smile stretches across your face, and in this moment, all is well.

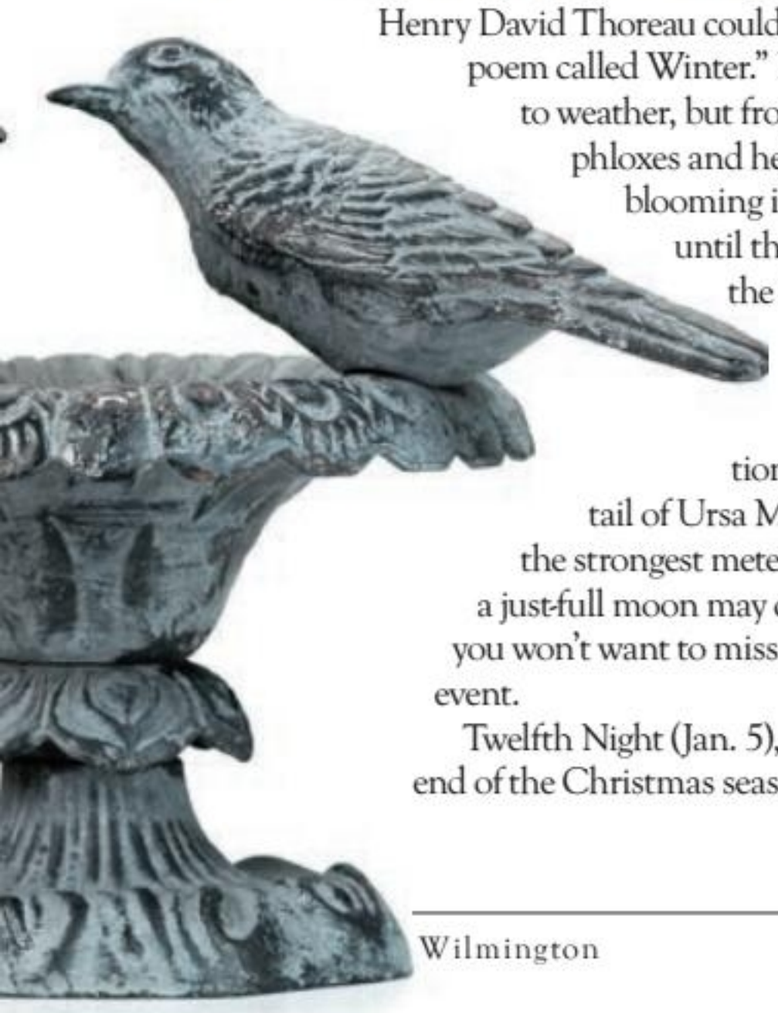
On this first day of January, you imagine the New Year unfolding perfectly. Steam curls from your tea mug as an amalgam of flavors perfumes the air.

Cinnamon bark, licorice, ginger and marshmallow root . . .

Giving yourself permission to luxuriate, you reach for a favorite book of poems. "To read a poem in January is as lovely as to go for a walk in June," said German author Jean Paul. You turn to a dog-eared page, can almost smell the honeysuckle and wild rose. You've read this poem many times, yet, like you, it is brand-new.

Blue Moon with Honey

Henry David Thoreau could wax poetic on "That grand old poem called Winter." Perhaps it's not the easiest season to weather, but from darkness comes light. Behold phloxes and hellebores, snowdrops and winter-blooming iris, and on Wednesday, Jan. 3, until the wee hours of Thursday, Jan. 4: the Quadrantids meteor shower.



Named for Quadrans Muralis, a defunct constellation once found between the constellations of Boötes and Draco, near the tail of Ursa Major, the Quadrantids is one of the strongest meteor showers of the year. Although a just-full moon may compromise viewing conditions, you won't want to miss a chance to see this celestial event.

Twelfth Night (Jan. 5), the eve of Epiphany, marks the end of the Christmas season and commemorates the arrival of the Magi who honored the Infant Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Seeking a hangover cure following this night of merrymaking and reverie? Ginger tea. And don't be shy with the honey dipper. The natural sugar will help your body burn off what's left of the wassail.

January's blue moon falls on the last day of the month. Reflect upon the ways you let your own light shine on this rare and energetically powerful night. Like attracts like. What are you calling in for 2018?

To Your Health!

Traditionally served in a large wooden bowl adorned with holly and ivy, wassail is a hot alcoholic cider that spells celebration. Many recipes call for port, sherry and fresh-baked apples, but here's a simple (un-spiked) version for you. Start now and wrap your hands around a mug of hot wassail within the hour. Serves four.

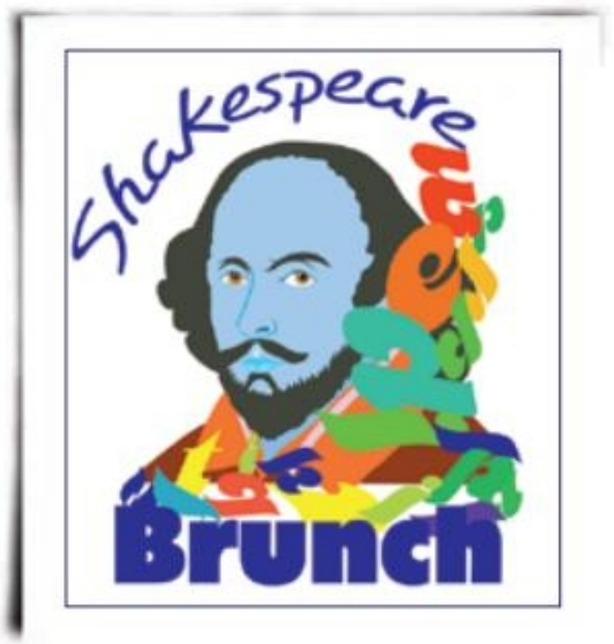
Ingredients
2 cups apple cider
1 cup orange juice
Juice of one lemon
2 cinnamon sticks
6 cloves
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg

Instructions
Combine all ingredients in a large pan.
Bring to simmer over medium-low heat.
Reduce heat. Continue simmering for 45 minutes.
Ladle into mugs and enjoy.

There are two seasonal diversions that can ease the bite of any winter. One is the January thaw. The other is the seed catalogues.

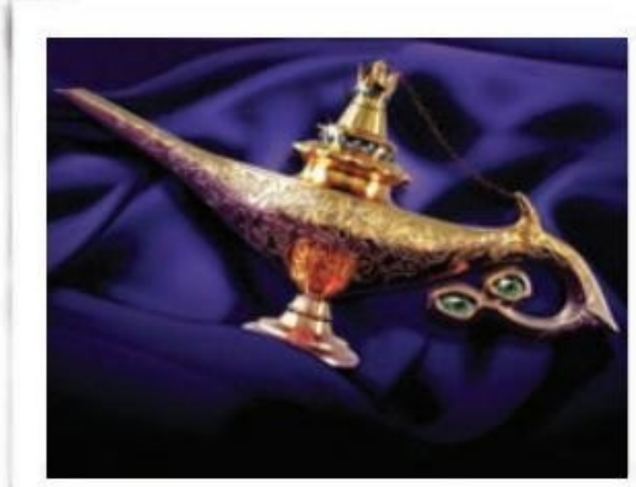
— Hal Borland

Arts Calendar



Shakespeare Brunch

1/21



Pied Piper Theatre: Aladdin

1/28

North Carolina Jazz Festival

2/1-3

1/1 3rd Annual Wrightsville Plunge

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Kick off the new year by plunging for a purpose at Wrightsville Beach. After-party immediately following the plunge. Event hosted by Communities in Schools of Cape Fear. Admission: $10 (children); $25 (adults). Behind Oceanic Restaurant, 703 South Lumina Avenue, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 343-1901 or www.ciscapefear.org.

1/5-7 Priscilla, Queen of the Desert

8:00 p.m. (Friday and Saturday) 3:00 p.m. (Sunday) Opera House Theatre Company presents *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* at Thalian Hall in downtown Wilmington. Based on the 1994 film of the same name, the performance tells the story of Tick, Bernadette and Adam as they board a bus named Priscilla and take their outrageous drag show across the Australian Outback. Admission: $34. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

1/11-14 Art & The Bloom

A design challenge/exhibition of the area's finest floral designers hosted by the New Hanover Garden Club, featuring live entertainment, refreshments, book signings, workshops and activities for everyone. Admission: $10–180. See website for ticket options and events. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wrightsville Beach. Info: www.newhanovergardenclub.org.

1/13 153rd Anniversary of the Battle of Fort Fisher

9 a.m – 4:30 p.m. Living history encampments, artillery firing, authors presentations and Friends of Fort Fisher Annual Meeting and Descendants Reunion. Infantry re-enactors will be on hand to talk with visitors about camp life and garrison duty as well as conduct the manual of arms, drills and firing demonstrations including the site's rifled and banded 32-pound cannon and the bronze 12-pound cannon. Admission: Free. Fort Fisher State Historic Site, 1610 Fort Fisher Boulevard, Kure Beach. Info: www.friendsoffortfisher.com.

1/13 & 14 Courtyards & Cobblestones

Jan. 13 and 14. 4 p.m. – 8 p.m. (Saturday venue tour); 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. (Sunday brunch). This one-of-a-kind wedding expo gives brides- and grooms-to-be tours of eight fully styled ceremony and reception venues and advice from wedding professionals. Bring your bridesmaids or your partner and take a walk through Wedding

Row. Admission: $35 (online); $45 (at the door). Bakery 105, 105 Orange Street, Wilmington. Info: www.courtyardsandcobblestones.com.

1/18 Martha Redbone Roots Project

7:30 p.m. Martha Redbone and her collaborator pianist have teamed up with North Carolina blues guitarist and vocalist Lakota John for an evening of music combining traditional Native American sounds and soulful blues. Admission: $15–40. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/arts.

1/20 9th Annual Cold Stroke Classic

10 a.m. A stand-up paddleboard (SUP) competition featuring two races, including a short 3.5-mile course and a longer 7-mile course, and various divisions to compete in. Admission: Free for spectators. See website for registration prices. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7112 or www.coldstrokeclassic.com .

1/21 Shakespeare Brunch

12 p.m – 2 p.m. Shakespeare Brunch at TheatreNOW in Wilmington features a greatly abridged (one-hour) reading of Shakespeare's classic play *Twelfth Night*. Admission: $8-$20. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

1/26-28 A Year With Frog and Toad

7:30 p.m. (Friday and Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). The Youth Theatre division of Thalian Association presents *A Year with Frog and Toad* at the Hannah Block Second Street Stage in downtown Wilmington. Featuring a sing-along score by Robert and Willie Reale, this whimsical show follows two great friends — the cheerful, popular Frog and the rather grumpy Toad — through four action-packed seasons. Admission: $15. Hannah Block Second Street Stage, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1788 or www.wilmingtoncommunityarts.org.

1/27 Amazing Grace

7:30 p.m. A new, original musical staged at the Wilson Center in downtown Wilmington, *Amazing Grace* is based on the true story behind the beloved song. The show follows John Newton, a musically talented young Englishman who is coming of age as Britain sits atop an international empire of slavery. Accompanied by his slave, Thomas, John embarks on a dangerous ocean voyage. In his darkest hour, John experiences a transformative moment of self-reckoning that inspires a fiery anthem of hope that guides him home. Admission: $41-90. Wilson Center, 703 North Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999.

1/28 Pied Piper Theatre: Aladdin

3 p.m. A live Pied Piper production of the musical *Aladdin* featuring local talent, copresented with the Junior League of Wilmington as part of Thalian Hall's Legends and Main Attractions series. Admission: $10. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

1/28 Precious Metal Jewelry Show

12 p.m. – 6 p.m. Featuring 40 of the finest metalsmiths in the southeast. One of a kind, handcrafted jewelry from the region's best enamelists, goldsmiths, silversmiths and glass-bead artists. There will be a BAC Cash Bar, and some of Wilmington's most amazing food trucks. Admission $5. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 859-4615 or www.brooklynartsnc.com

2/1 LA Theatre Works: The Mountaintop

7:30 p.m. On the night before his assassination, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. struck up an unlikely friendship with a hotel maid, which is narrated in Katori Hall's *The Mountaintop*, featuring Aja Naomi King as Camae and Larry Powell as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Admission: $20–50. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/arts.

2/1-3 38th Annual North Carolina Jazz Festival

7:30 p.m. – 12:00 a.m. The 38th Annual North Carolina Jazz Festival at the Hilton Riverside in downtown Wilmington features several styles of jazz music over three nights. Admission: $15-$225. Hilton Wilmington Riverside, 301 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 793-1111 or www.ncjazzfestival.com

2/2 The Birdland All-Stars Featuring Tommy Igoe

7:30 p.m. A live musical performance by The Birdland All-Stars on their first tour in five years, featuring the music of David Bowie, The Police, Charlie Parker and more as part of Thalian Hall's "Legends and Main Attractions" series. Admission: $22–40. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

2/2-3 Divine Diva's Benefit Concert and Silent Auction

7:30 p.m. Thalian Association Community Theatre (TACT) in Wilmington presents Divine Divas, a special two-night concert to benefit She ROCKS and TACT. The concert features 12 well-known actresses from the local theatre community and performers from TACT Youth Theatre program performing familiar songs from the American musical theatre. Directed by Mike Thompson with music direction by Denice Hopper. The event also includes a silent auction at each performance including restaurant and hotel packages, jewelry, yacht parties, healthy and beauty packages and 2-D and 3-D artwork. Admission: $30. Community Arts Center, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1788 or www.thalian.org.

2/2-4 Wine and Chocolate Festival

7 p.m. – 10 p.m. (Friday); 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Saturday); 12 p.m. – 4 p.m. (Sunday). An annual chocolate and wine festival featuring tastings, live music and entertainment, hors d'oeuvres, a marketplace, raffles, kids' activities, and more. Admission: $15–50. Coastline Conference Center, 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 512-9948 or www.wilmingtonwineandchocolatefestival.com.

2/3 Wilmington Symphony Orchestra Concert

7:30 p.m. The Wilmington Symphony Orchestra Concert at the Wilson Center features Julia Walker Jewell's "Dance of the Coin" and Alexander Borodin's "Polovtsian Dances," plus Student Concerto Competition winners. Conducted by Steven Errante. Admission: $10-$35. Wilson Center, 703 North Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or www.wilmingtonsymphony.org.

2/6 An Evening With Art Garfunkel

8 p.m. An Evening with Art Garfunkel at the Wilson Center in downtown Wilmington features the singer, actor, and poet who has made an indelible mark on the music world as both a solo artist and half of the unrivaled Simon and Garfunkel. Admission: $35-$75. Wilson Center, 703 North Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999

2/10 Heart of the Matter Fashion Show

4 p.m. – 8 p.m. Watch some of Wilmington's best talent perform at this fourth annual charity fashion show, aiming to draw awareness to the at-risk youth in southeastern North Carolina.

Event hosted by the Cape Fear Volunteer Center. Info: (910) 392-8180 or capefearvolunteercenter.org.

2/15 An Evening of Valentines with Emile Pandolfi

7:30 p.m. A Valentine's Day cabaret show performed by Emile Pandolfi and his guest vocalist Dana Russell, featuring musical selections by George Gershwin, Irving Berlin and more. Admission: $22–40. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

2/16 Feast Down East Food Conference

8 a.m. – 3:30 p.m . Feast Down East's annual Local Food Conference brings together all those in our community who are invested in supporting and growing the local food system in Southeastern North Carolina. This includes farmers and fishermen, food retailers and establishments, consumers, advocates and community leaders. The purpose of the conference is to strengthen the activities of these groups and the networks between them. Workshop topics include agricultural and gardening techniques, farm business skills, local food buying and advocacy, and the policy work of local food councils. Admission: Free. UNCW, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-7723 or www.feastdowneast.org.

2/17 & 18 Art For All

10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday) 12 p.m. – 5 p.m. (Sunday) A unique and creative art show that will feature more than 60 local artists, food trucks, cash bar, and a coffee shop. Admission: $5. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 859-4615 or www.brooklynartsnc.com .

2/17 & 18 Wilmington Spring Home Show

10 a.m. – 8 p.m. (Saturday) 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. (Sunday) Events designed for homeowners who are in all stages of remodeling, landscaping, and decorating their homes. Events includes home improvement and remodeling exhibits with product demonstrations and sample interior and exterior vignettes. Admission: Free. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 210-6138 or www.wilmingtonhomeshow.com.

Cape Fear Heart Ball

2/24

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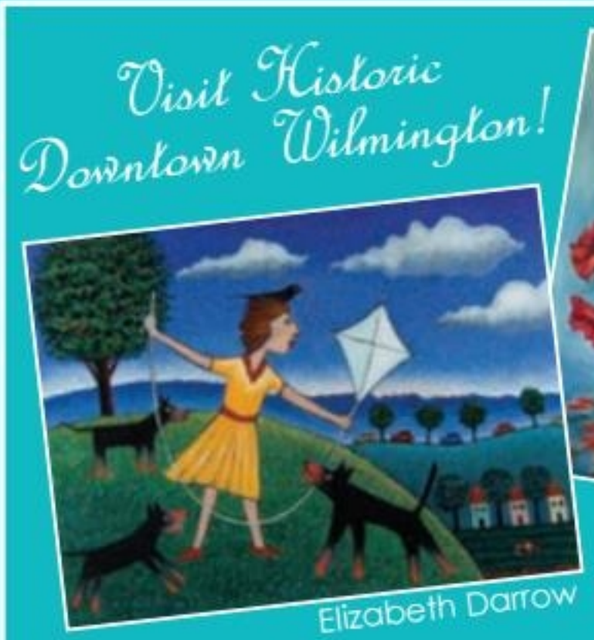
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2/22 10th Annual Play at the Beach Fundraiser

11 a.m. – 3 p.m. Enjoy a fantastic view of the ocean and a fun-filled day playing bridge, mahjong, canasta, pinochle or any other card or board game you may enjoy to help raise funds for the Assistance League of Greater Wilmington. Admission: $35 (includes lunch). Shell Island Resort, 270 North Lumina Avenue, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 262-5539 or www.algw.assistanceleague.org.

2/22 Sam Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox

8 p.m. Scott Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox at the Wilson Center in downtown Wilmington has interpreted hits by Lady Gaga, Beyoncé, The White Stripes, Lorde, Outkast, Radiohead, Maroon 5 and many more. The collective has earned more than 740 million YouTube views and 2.7 million subscribers. Admission: $35-$65. Wilson Center, 703 North Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999.

2/24 Cape Fear Heart Ball

6 p.m. – 11:30 p.m. A celebration of creating and sharing. An engaging evening of fun and passion bringing community and philanthropic leaders together to honor donors and volunteers. Admission: $175-500. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-9270.

2/24 68th Annual Tidewater Camellia Club Winter Show and Camellia Sale

10 a.m. – 5 p.m. A show and sale hosted by the local Tidewater Camellia Club. The event will include a judged camellia show with more than 500 blooms, a children's display with an interactive corner, and beautiful plants for sale. Admission: Free. New Hanover County Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.tidewatercamelliaclub.com.

2/25 ACRONYM at Chamber Music Wilmington

Hailed as groundbreaking and gutsy, ACRONYM is more like a contemporary music group than an early music string band. These modern troubadours perform the wild instrumental music of the 17th century, bringing to light delightfully lesser known composers of the early Baroque alongside fresh interpretations of Vivaldi. Admission: $30 (Adult) $15 (Under 30/Student/Active Military). UNCW Beckwith Recital Hall, 5270 Randall Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.chambermusicwilmington.org.

2/28 Nine at Thalian Hall

8 p.m. Opera House Theatre Company presents Nine at Thalian Hall. Based on Fellini's 8 1/2, the show follows world-famous film director Guido Contini, who's facing midlife and marital crises as he attempts to come up with a plot for his next film. Flashbacks reveal the substance of his life as he examines his relationships with the many women he has known, and as each comes to remind him of who he is, why they love him, and why he needs them. Admission: $34. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.operahousetheatrecompany.net

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Tuesday Wine Tasting

6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional and small-plate specials all

ARTS & CULTURE

Charles Jones African Art

African Art & Modern Art

Works by Edouard Duval Carrie, Jim Dine, Orozco and Others

Painting by Jose Bedia, 2013
Moba clan figure, Northern Ghana
Bakwele currency, Congo

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night. Admission: Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fotunateglass.com.

Tuesday **Cape Fear Blues Jam**

8 p.m. A night of live music performed by the area's best blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. Admission: Free. The Rusty Nail, 1310 South Fifth Avenue, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday **Weekly Exhibition Tours**

1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. A weekly tour of the iconic Cameron Art Museum, featuring presentations about the various exhibits and the selection and installation process. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartsmuseum.org.

Thursday **Yoga at the CAM**

12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. Sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday & Saturday **Blackwater Adventure Tours**

Join in an educational guided boat tour from downtown Wilmington to River Bluffs, exploring the mysterious beauty of the Northeast Cape Fear River. Various times. See website. River Bluffs, 1100 Chair Road, Castle Hayne. Info: (910) 623-5015 or www.riverbluffsliving.com.

Friday & Saturday **Cape Fear Museum Little Explorers**

10 a.m. Meet your friends in Museum Park for fun hands-on activities. Enjoy interactive circle time, conduct exciting experiments, and play games related to a weekly theme. Perfect for children ages 3 to 6 and their adult helpers. Brought to you by PNC Growing Up Great. Admission: Free. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4370 or www.capefearmusuem.com.

Saturday **Taste of Downtown Wilmington**

2:15 p.m., 2:45 p.m., & 3:15 p.m. A weekly gourmet food tour by Taste Carolina, featuring some of downtown Wilmington's best restaurants. Each time slot showcases different food. See website for details. Admission: $55–75. Riverwalk at Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (919) 237-2254 or www.tastecarolina.net/wilmington/com.

To add a calendar event, please contact calendar@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted by the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

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Port City People

MDA'S 3rd Annual Toast to Life Gala

Benefit for the Muscular Dystrophy Association's Eastern Carolina's Chapter

Friday, October 20, 2017

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Sgt. Ryan Butschle & Stefani Butschle

Wally Simpson, Karen & Mike Benton, Melissa Sinclair

Doren, Jessica & Creed Kolasa

Hannah Nevarez, Miles Strickland

Andy & Nancy Black, Heather & Mitch Gower

Hannah Patrick, Randy Aldridge

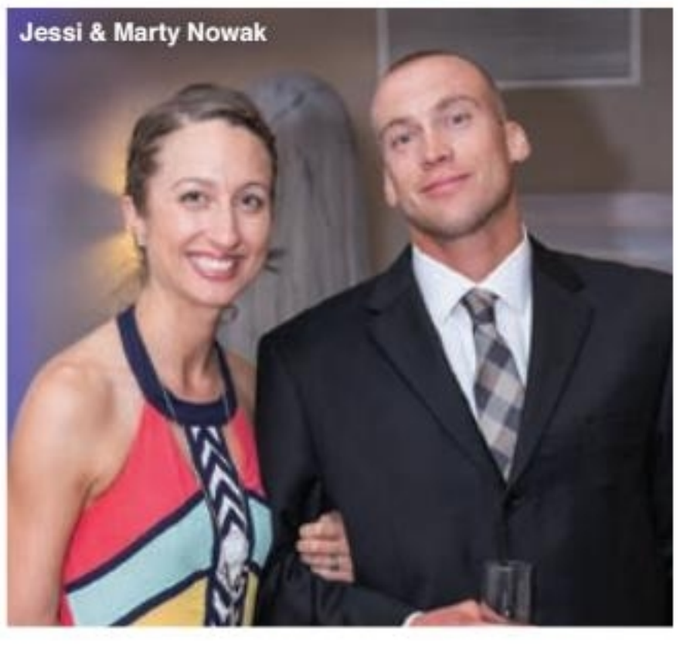
Louise Forbes-Simpson, Bo Dean

Christi & Stacey Johnson

Lynn & Ellen Tucker

Erin & Caleb Fallon

Heather McCall, Brian Bost


Jessi & Marty Nowak

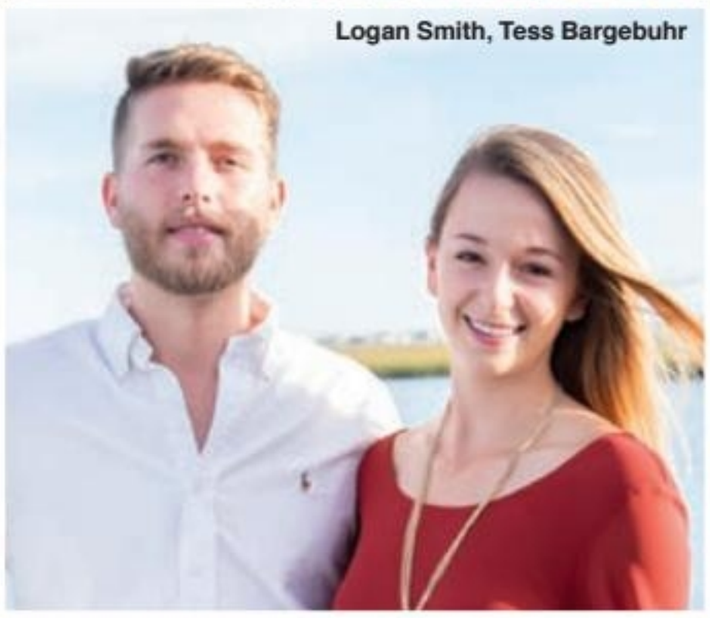
Port City People

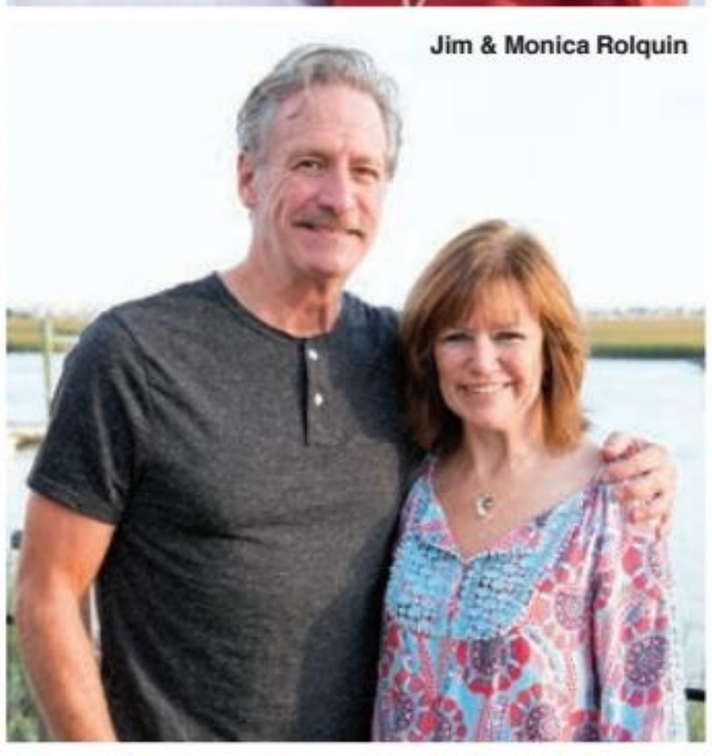
5th Annual Taste of Wrightsville Beach

Hosted by Wrightsville Beach Foundation and MarineMax

Saturday, October 21, 2017

Photographs by Bill Ritenour





Port City People

12th Annual Wilmington Fur Ball
"MasquerAID"

Saturday, November 4, 2017

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Susan Warren, John Varner, Taffy Collopy

Josh & Christie Small, Heather Ohm-Fisher, Dave Fisher, Chris Gulley

Carly & Jason Forman

Melina Fullwood, Jill Gambino-O'Leary

Chris & Rebecca McAbee, Melanie Bammert, Rachael Gainey, Mark Bammert

Ian & Anna Flannery

Sybil Stokes, Susan Perry

Chris & Rachel Capone, Tess Wheatley

David Eckles, Travis Gilbert. Gregg Thomas, Phyllis Goodson

Dr. Slade Suchecki, Amie Sloane, Lee Anne Quattrucci, Joseph Brown

Peter Foley, Christina Rivenbark, Vanessa Cain, Earl Oxendine

Rachel Gainey, Ryan Inge

Port City People

Cucalorus Oyster Party

Bellamy Mansion

Friday, November 10, 2017

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Zeb Mims, Wesley Brown, Jordan Vogt, Meagan Golden

Elizabeth & Taylor Blaylock

Carter Jewell, Clayton Hamerski

Charlie Ball, Lydia Chandler, Ethan Sigmon, Bay Ariz

Connor Malloy, Joanna Carpentier

Will Benfield, Eliza Douglas

Martha Gregory, Rachel Wyman, Angeline Gragasin

Richard Huse, Shea Lenkaitis

Dan Brawley, Rachel Taylor

Chad & Andrea Corbin

Bob & Junie Foley

Evan Schiappa, Colleen Brown

Angela Kennedy, Patricia Lawler

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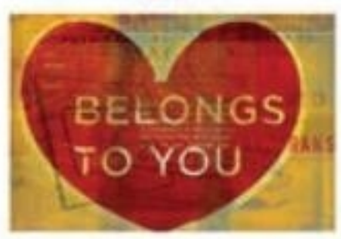

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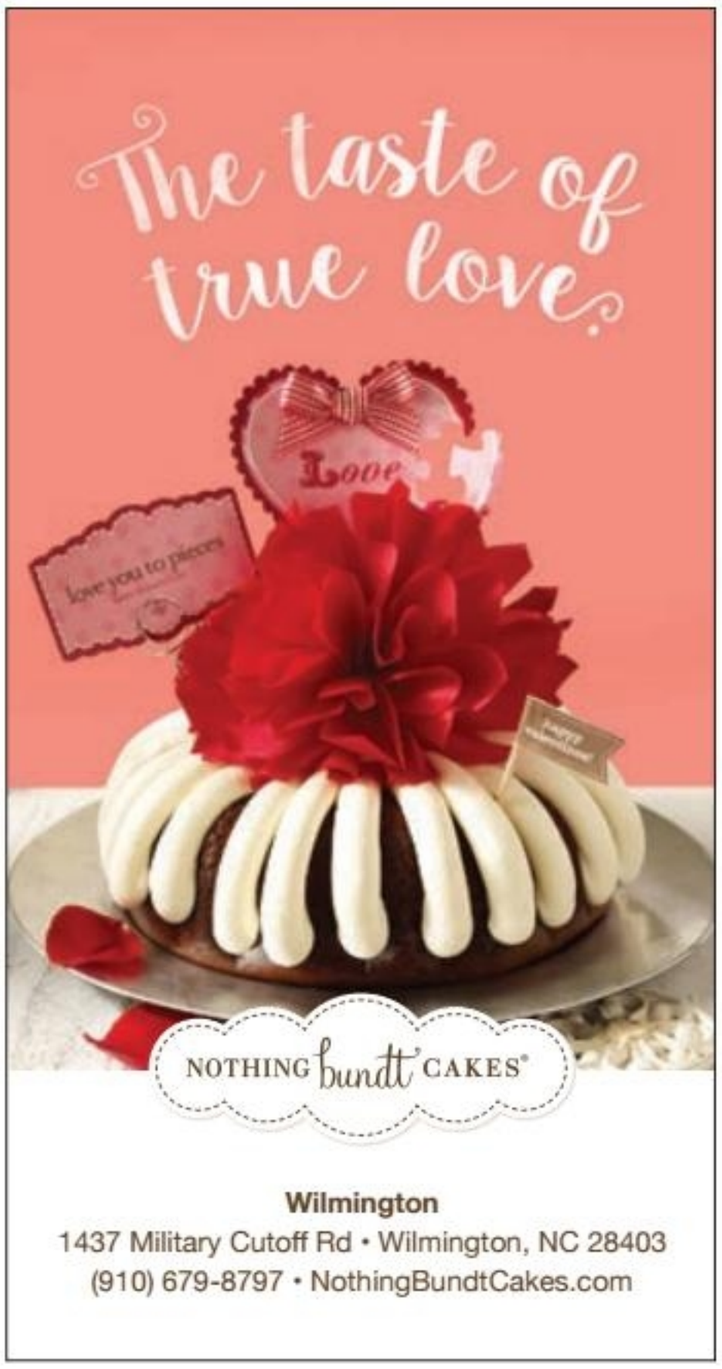

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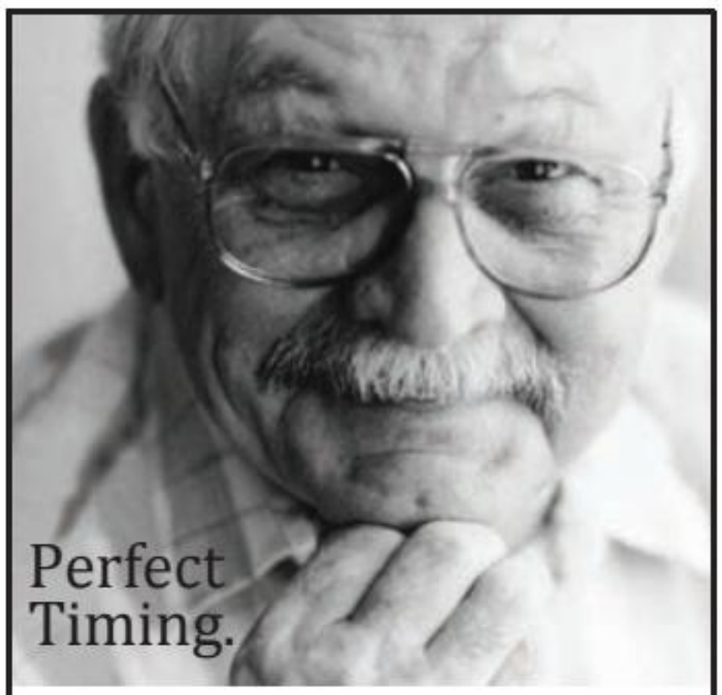

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Dark Side of the Moon

As ironic as it is, this month's total lunar eclipse is a highlight of 2018

By Astrid Stellanova

Oh, my, Star Children! We are in for a treat on January 31st, when there will be a total eclipse of the full moon. If that isn't a bang-up way to start the New Year, then I don't know what is. Take a moon bath under the stars! Hoot and holler and raise your voices up! Star gazers say this cosmic event will bring mothers and working women into the limelight. Watch for this to be a recurring theme all year long. *Ad Astra–Astrid*

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
You don't need to keep looking in the rearview mirror. All good things lie ahead, Sugar. Memory lane is closed. And what you have lying straight before you is worth focusing on. Meanwhile, there is a great opportunity for investing in yourself and a new idea in the new year. Don't let that escape you — take the off ramp!

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
Well, look at you social caterpillar! You have broken into a tough circle of friends that only took about a thousand forevers. But you were patient and they finally saw that one of you was worth ten of a lot of people. You're well loved, Honey Bun.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
You sayin' your Jaguar can't make it up the driveway at your mountain place? Or you're allergic to all metals but platinum? Sugar, that is something called a humble-brag. Nobody else has told you, so I have to. It is true you have been prosperous. And that you have especially fine taste. Just say a little bit less about it.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
Somebody bamboozled you pretty good. Looked like you couldn't tell a skunk from a Billy goat. Well, they reckoned wrong. You'll get your chance to settle the score but don't let it concern you. The view ain't worth the climb, Honey Bunny.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)
There is one somebody who gets under your skin and makes you lose your ever-loving mind. You know who and when. You have got to stop the blame game, hurling insults faster than Kim Jong-un. It might be a game to them but it is bad for your constitution, Sugar.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
You've been showing too many teeth. Makes people nervous, and that completely undermines you. Stop trying so hard to be liked. You don't have to work that angle. If you can stand in your truth, they will admire you, anyhow. You are likeable enough, Sally Field.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
Let's get some lumbar support for you, since you're having a lot of trouble with your backbone. The thing is, you let a situation get out of control because you felt a lot of misplaced sympathy. But what they need from you is leadership. That might require you to be a lot firmer than your Beautyrest mattress.

Leo (July 23–August 22)
Yep, your little plan fell into place, which either puts you in the catbird seat or the litter box. You were cunning and scored a win. But is this a game you really want to win? Ask that question. Also, a friend from your past needs a pal. It would be good karma just to let them know you remember them.

Virgo (August 23–September 22)
Can't never could, Sugar, but don't kill yourself. It is also true that flop sweat ain't becoming. During the holidays you may be asked to step up and take on a social role that you have never especially wanted. But it will be growth for you. And a toehold inside a door that has been closed for a very long time.

Libra (September 23–October 22)
You speak Southern? Then you know not to look over yonder for something right under foot. Focus is all you need to find your heart's desire. And even though you feel like you have given all you have for a mighty big goal, you have something important and don't even recognize it.

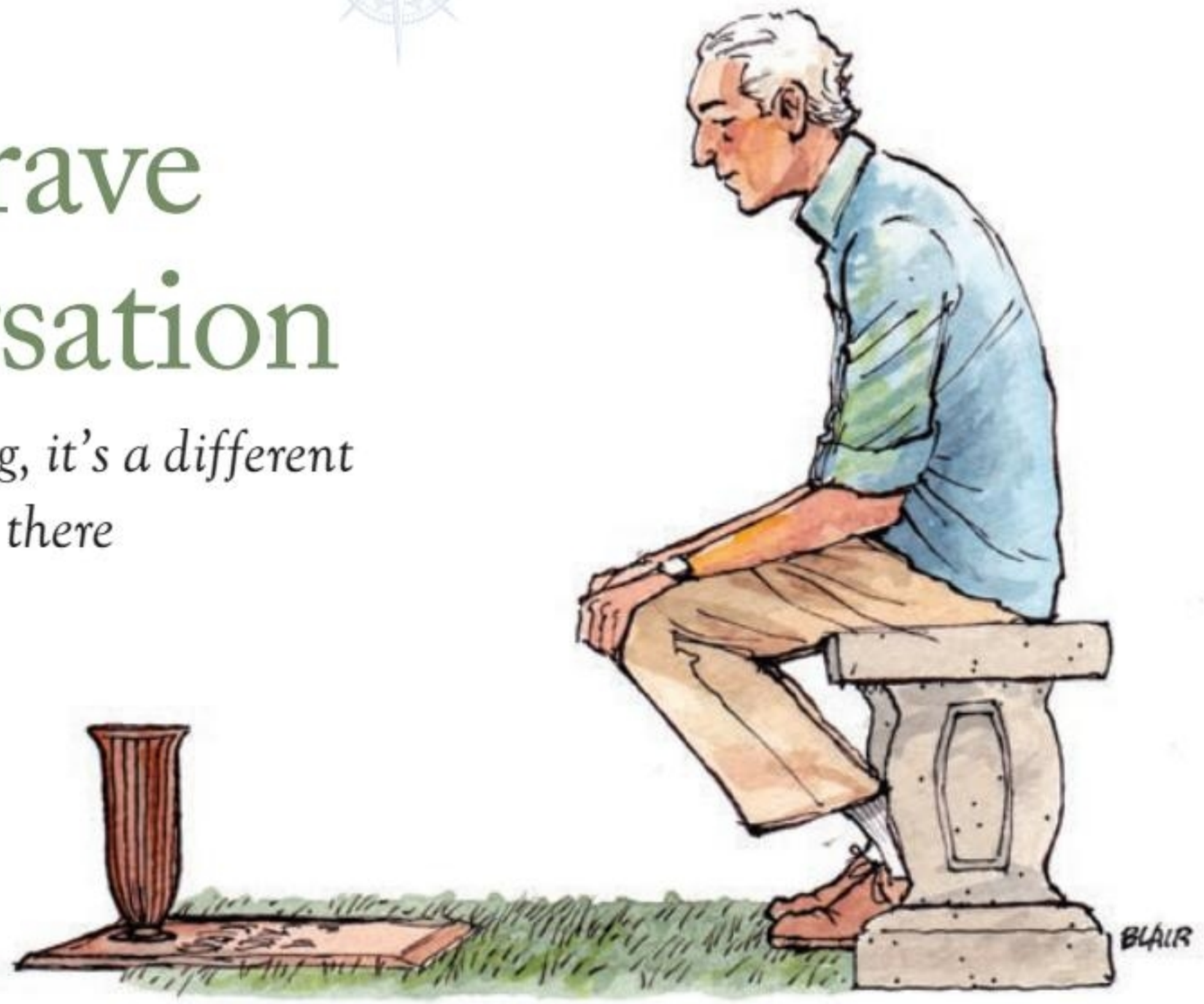
Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
Hunh? Darling, you brought a cup of Ramen noodles to a knife fight? I don't know what got into you lately, but you have had this idea that life is a spectator sport. Well, what are you planning to do with the rest of this special life? This month is a good time to ask yourself if you are going to keep chasing after unicorns.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
It was not your fault that all the effort you made last month didn't pan out. So move on, Sunshine and enjoy the show. There's a whole new opportunity right before you, right this second, to become the person your Mama always knew you could be. Nobody can eclipse your bright lights this month.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

A Grave Conversation

Technically speaking, it's a different world up there



By Clyde Edgerton

My parents were born in 1902 and 1904 into homes without electricity. That kind of describes a starting point regarding my relationship to modern technology.

I remember an old Model T truck we kept in our backyard when I was a child. To start the engine, you inserted a crank into a hole below the radiator in the front grill. Then with the ignition turned on (after you'd primed the engine with the choke) you turned the crank until the engine started.

Our truck was equipped with a wooden trough across the back end of the truck bed—where the tailgate goes. At the end of the trough was a circular saw. You could jack up the back of the truck, place a saw-belt around a tire or axle, the belt would turn the saw, and you could cut firewood from logs.

My grandfather (born 1870) used to cutting wood with an ax, thought the contraption was unnecessary. Once, when he saw a neighbor cooking on a grill, he said, "We used to cook inside and go to the bathroom outside. Now they're turning that around."

After automobile electric windows, air conditioning and automatic transmissions came along in the '40s and '50s, my father and mother would have nothing to do with them (until the '70s).

Now, on many days, I think about sitting by my father's grave in Durham and having a conversation with him. He died in 1980.

"Daddy, how's it going?" I would say.

"Nothing much happening on my end. How's it going up there?"

"Right much happening on the technology end," I'd say.

"I figured that might be coming. What about on the morality end?"

"Not much there . . . that seems to stay kind of constant. But on the technology part, I was just thinking about how when you bought a car for the family you always wanted the windows that were rolled up with a handle, no air conditioning and a straight transmission."

"Oh yeah, I didn't like the extras. But go ahead and feed me some new facts about technology, maybe politics, economics."

"Let's stay with technology," I'd say. "No, wait a minute. On the politics: Do you remember Garland Fushee? The man who lived next to Tee Rawlings, service station?"

"Of course. How could anybody forget Garland Fushee?"

"Well, think about Garland being president," I'd say.

"Garland Fushee?"

"Yes sir. Remember about how much Garland loved golf, and how much he would have loved to tweet about people he didn't like?"

"Garland wasn't a bird," Daddy would say.

"Oh, that's right. Sorry. Tweeting is something people do now. It's connected in a roundabout way to technology. Connected to advances since the computer."

"Computer? I remember that computer on campus at Chapel Hill back in 1971. Remember when we went in that building for a drink of water and you showed it to me. It filled up a room."

"I do remember that. By the way, here in Wilmington, we buy water now—those who can afford it."

"You buy water? What in the world?" Daddy would say.

"Long story," I'd say. "It gets us over into economics, always connected to politics. Turns out our water problems are good for business."

"How so?"

"Bottled-water business is looking up. And an upriver business releases chemicals into the water and a bunch of downriver businesses benefit: funeral homes, cremation services, pharmacies, hospitals, tombstone makers, florists."

"Oh, I see. Hmmmm. Sounds like they're finally backing off on regulations."

"That's the idea."

"All in all, looks like I may have checked out at about the right time."

"You could say that, Daddy. We'll chat again in a few years. See how things are going."

"Let's do that, Son. See you then."

And then I'd hop in my car and drive it back to Wilmington. In less than a decade it may be driving me. A lot of technology in a couple of lifetimes.

Clyde Edgerton is the author of 10 novels, a memoir and most recently, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

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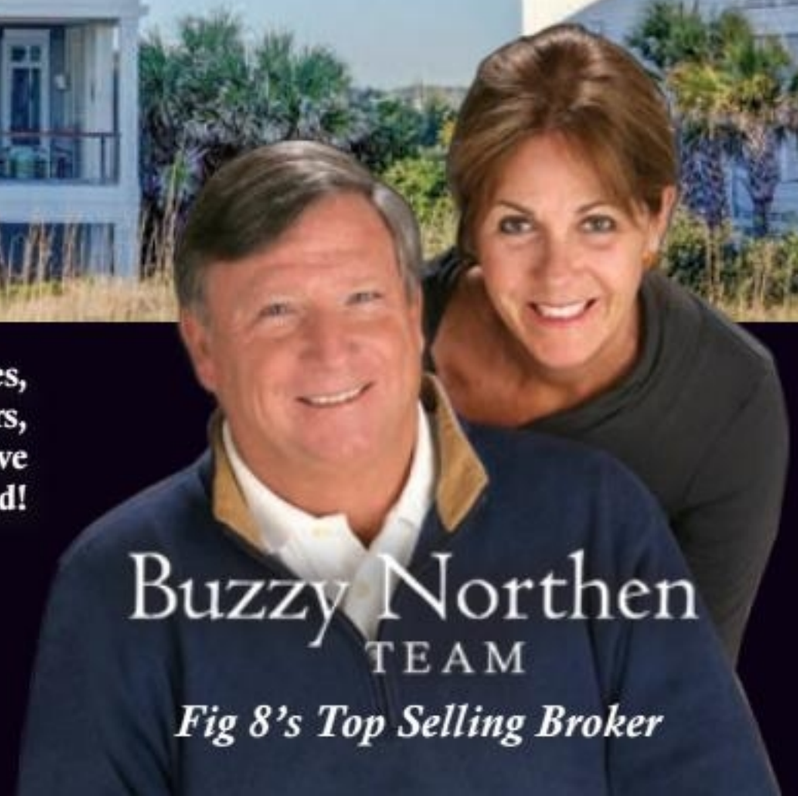

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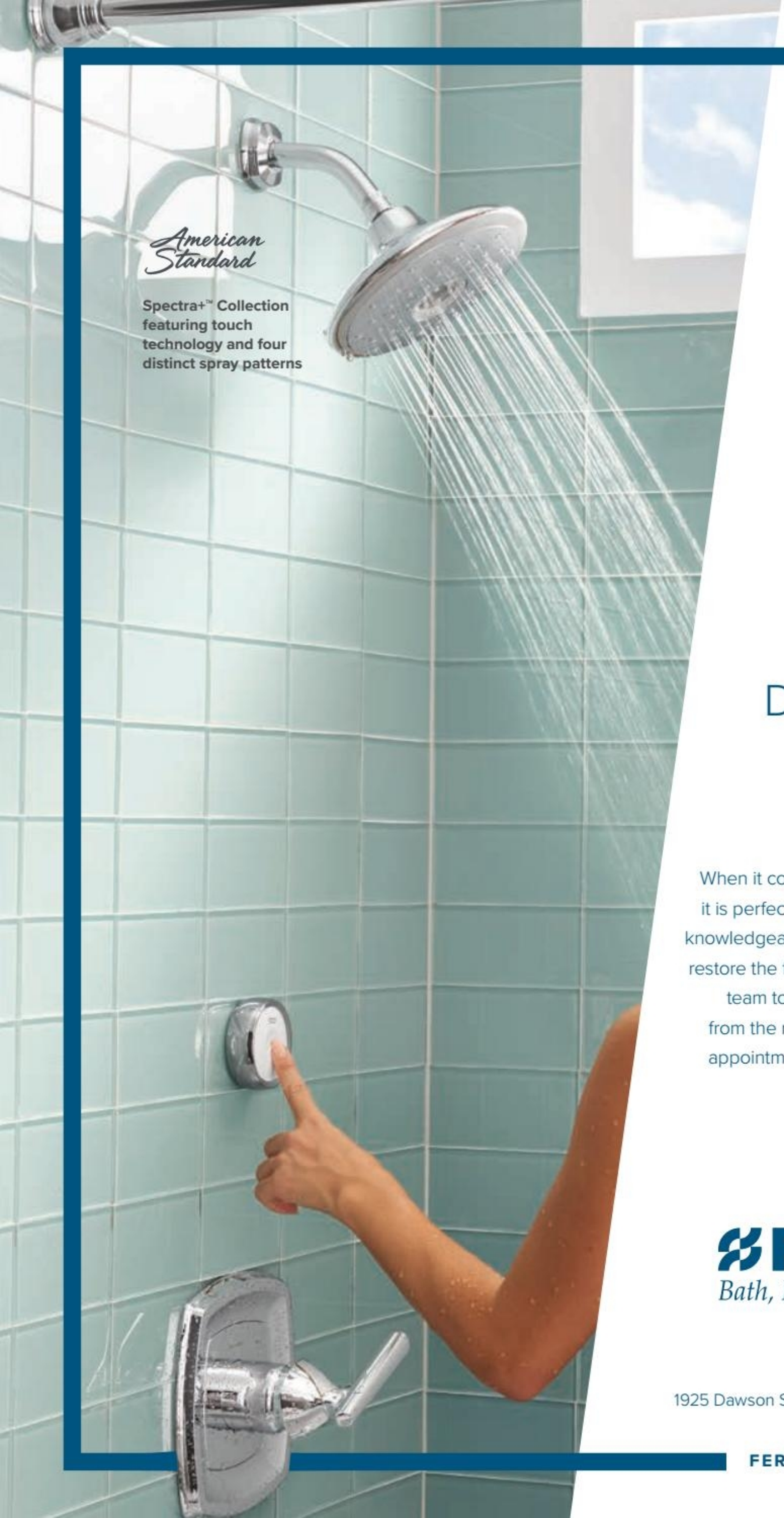

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